

THE
WORLD UNMASK'D;

OR,

The Philosopher the greatest Cheat;

IN

TWENTY-FOUR DIALOGUES.

A NEW EDITION.

Translated from the French.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED AND SOLD BY J. PHILLIPS, GEORGE
YARD, LOMBARD-STREET.

M. DCC. LXXXVI.

WORLD UNASK'D;

THE GREAT CHIEF

TWENTY-FOUR DIALOGUES

A NEW EDITION.



LONDON:

PRINTED AND SOLD BY J. THURLOUGH, GEORGE
YARD, CORNHILL-STREET.

M. DCC. LXXXIII.

TO THE
BOOKSELLER.

THESE Dialogues having been communicated to me, I thought you would not be displeased with giving them to the publick. Perhaps, on perusing them, you will have some reason to believe they may turn to account.

Novelty has charms for the whole world. In these pieces every thing is new, except only the substance or essence of truth, which cannot be so. To which it may be added, the form of them is original; and it would be no easy matter to find any thing already written in this way.

An attempt of this nature may, perhaps, startle some honest persons of the old stamp, who lose all patience at the bare mention of the term novelty; but they may elsewhere find wherewithal to satisfy their taste for antiquity.

I very much fear, that persons of too much gravity will soon be disgusted at the gaiety of the style. If so, they will not want books that are more grave as to the style than the matter.

The methodical learned will meet with nothing here to their mind. They will to no purpose look for method in dialogues, which are managed in a walk. Every thing favours of that ease and liberty, which the walk and the air they breathe, in the spring, produce among intimate friends.

You will be able to judge, when you read them, whether the number
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FROM A FRIEND.

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of persons of this latter taste, will prevail over those of the opposite taste.

I am, Sir, &c.

A LETTER from a Friend of the
Author. To Mr. D * * * *

S I R,

I Here send you the manuscript Dialogues which you desired of me. You want to know my thoughts on them. Is it reasonable that I should prevent your judgment; would it not be more equitable to allow you to see things with your own eyes?

What you had been told of them, began to give you some prejudice against them; so that I may have some right to justify them so far, as to reduce you to an equilibrium. However, I shall not enter on that task; it
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VI A LETTER

would be proceeding against the design of this work, which requires no apology, and, perhaps, will not easily admit of one.

Here, Sir, I ought to explain myself. An attempt to justify the substance of self-evident truths, is a mere banter. An attempt to justify things that are barely accidental, and only different manners of viewing, or explaining the true, would be superfluous; since the author himself justifies them only in that respect. He gives his thoughts only as a sort of conjectures, or if you please, as reveries; by the help of which, every man considers the true in itself. To pretend to justify the form of them, would be to undertake an impossibility; for to justify it to the taste of some persons, would be to incur the censure of several others. Men of gravity cannot bear the justification of the
pleasantry

pleasantry and gaiety, which reigns among the actors of these pieces; at least, they will be displeased to see them talk in that strain on the most serious subjects; of this sort is their discourse on truth or religion.

On the other hand, persons of a gay turn of mind, who have been used to exercise their humour on nothings, or frivolous pleasantries, (persons to whom truth appears gloomy, because they are unacquainted with it, and grow melancholy on the least attention to the true, which carries them out of their element) such persons, I say, will not allow a man to justify the serious of the subjects here examined to the bottom, and which, consequently, requires some attention.

Persons of this character may indeed be more tractable than those of the contrary character: without renouncing gaiety or pleasantry, which
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is inseparable from it, they may contract a familiarity with truth, and come at last to have a relish of it, and be pleased with it as their own element, as the element of joy and serenity.

These Dialogues, by a small sample, shew this is not impossible: and it appears that the friends here introduced, do not quit their own element, even when they are most attentive on explaining the substance of truth.

Those who employ their genius on abstract subjects, will here find nothing that demands too much of their application. If they are such as are satisfied with ideas rather than words, and require a precision in ideas, without trifling on expressions; they will find some strokes which will not displease them.

If they are accustomed to distinguish what is original, from what is borrowed

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ed or foisted in, they will easily excuse several irregularities, which would be unpardonable in a man of study; but are pardonable in a reveur, or one who delivers his thoughts only as reveries.* Such as cannot relish the true, unless it is treated geometrically, or with a rigorous exactness of terms, will never be able to like so immethodical a way of writing.

The impatient part of mankind, who decide without understanding the drift of a discourse, will here have fresh occasion to exert themselves. As most of the subjects are only slightly touched on, by strokes which rather give a glimpse of truth, than unfold it to view, their precipitation will give them frequent opportunities of pronouncing this or that false.

* In the seventeenth and eighteenth Dialogues, the Reader may see what gave occasion to the terms reveur and reveries.

Devotees of a certain kind, who can relish nothing that relates to religion, unless it be supported with a croud of Scripture quotations, will certainly disapprove of the omission of such passages.

You see now, Sir, how impossible it would be to succeed in justifying the Dialogues to persons of different tastes. It is better to leave every one the liberty of judging for himself, if every one can be allowed that liberty. By that liberty, I mean an impartial disposition, or perfect neutrality, not determined by any secret inclination or private interest to pronounce pro or con. No other liberty seems to me sufficient for being a competent judge, because without that, a man would be at once judge and party.

I am, &c.

THE
WORLD UNMASKED,
OR THE
PHILOSOPHER the greatest Cheat.

DIALOGUE I.

PHILO, a *Lawyer*; CRITO, a *Philosopher*; and
ERASTUS, a *Merchant*.

Philo. **D**EAR Erastus, I am told you are
much changed since I saw you last;
that you are become a Devoté, or Pietist.

Crito. It is matter of surprize to several; but it
would be still more so, if you could gain us over to
the same party.

Erastus. That would be pleasant indeed; espe-
cially, if I should gain you without attempting it.

Crito. How, Erastus! would you have so little
zeal, as not to endeavour to make proselytes, and
increase your party?

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Erastus.

Erastus. Were I of any party, the honour that would be done me by such profelytes as you, would not allow me to neglect them.

Philo. But is the world really mistaken, *Erastus*, in imagining you are become a Devoté or Pietist?

Erastus. When you have had your jest out, I will speak seriously; in the mean time, I assure you, I claim neither of those appellations.

Philo. How so, *Erastus*? Is it because they do you not honour enough?

Erastus. That is not the reason, *Philo.* When taken in a favourable sense, they would do me too much; in any other sense, they would be the direct contrary of my character.

Crito. How then do you understand them, *Erastus*?

Erastus. Thus: the appellation of Devoté, taken in a good sense, ought to denote a person devoted to God: and that of a Pietist, a pious person; which comes to the same. In this sense, as I said before, they would do me too much honour; and I am far from assuming them. In the vulgar sense, the appellation of Devoté denotes a bigot, and very often a hypocrite; as that of Pietist, denotes one possessed with a party-spirit, one out of humour with all mankind, and who studies to distinguish himself on a principle of vanity. I own, I do not take this to be my character. Pray, tell me, gentlemen, in

which of these two senses, you have bestowed the title of Pietist or Devoté on me ?

Crito. Not in the latter, you may be assured.

Eraſtus. Then it must be in the former.

Philo. Can that be a question, Eraſtus ?

Eraſtus. If I take you right, your character of a person truly pious, comprehends a zeal, or party-spirit, which endeavours to gain proselytes, or such as call themselves so, in order to enlarge the number of its partizans. Are these your notions of piety ?

Crito. Not altogether, I own.

Philo. They are still less mine.

Eraſtus. Now Crito is beginning to contradict himself; I desire he will be consistent.

Crito. If I might be allowed the liberty, Eraſtus, I should say you are a little malicious, in making your friends fall into contradictions.

Eraſtus. Not I, Crito; I only let them see it.

Crito. Since you are resolved to give no quarter, and must be answered directly, I shall freely own, that when I connected the ideas of piety with those of party zeal, I formed only confused notions, which presented nothing distinct to my mind.

Philo. I can say the same for myself, Eraſtus.

Eraſtus. I am surprized that philosophers and lawyers, men who make profession of advancing nothing but what they have distinct ideas of, can be satisfied with what is confused and indeterminate.

Philo. You see, Crito, how he handles us.

Crito. It is no more, than what we in some measure deserve, for beginning the attack. But, rail-lery apart; since you are not disposed to pass for a Devoté, either in the good or bad sense of that term, I beg to know, *Eraustus*, what you would pass for.

Philo. For an honest man, without doubt.

Crito. Or rather for a good man.

Eraustus. Is it absolutely necessary I should pass for something? It is not my inclination, dear *Crito*. I am of opinion that one ought to think of becoming a good man, before one pretends to pass for such.

Crito. Are you not a good man then, *Eraustus*?

Eraustus. I may, perhaps, be enough so to bear the name; but must own, that to be a good man, according to my idea, implies something more than what is comprehended in the common notion. In my way of thinking, a man devoted to God, and a good man, are almost the same thing.

Philo. At that rate, there will be but few good men among those who would pass for such.

Eraustus. One of the surest marks that a man is not really such, is a desire of appearing so. A man in trade never takes more pains to appear rich, than when his affairs are in the worst situation.

Crito. But I would fain know, *Eraustus*, how you came by these thoughts. Who is the master that has formed so good a scholar?

Eraustus.

Eraſtus. Should I tell you, Crito, you would perhaps endeavour to exceed me, as you did formerly at college. I have not forgot your ſuperiority in learning; and how do you know but I may be capable of jealousy?

Philo. If there is any reaſon to fear Crito on that ſcore, you muſt allow it is not the ſame in regard to me, and that you may communicate your ſecret to me without any danger.

Eraſtus. Philo, I have not much leſs reaſon to miſtruſt you. The lawyers are a ſet of gentlemen, who go through with all they undertake. What would become of a poor trader, divided between a thouſand cares and articles of buſineſs, if he fell into the hands of two ſuch philoſophers as you?

Philo. Really, Crito, I am at a loſs what courſe to take for getting any thing out of him.

Eraſtus. It ſhall be your own fault, Philo, if you do not oblige me to answer you. Had you ſpoke to me ſeriously, I ſhould have answered you in the ſame ſtrain. Perhaps you imagined that, ſince the world has been pleaſed to beſtow on me the character of a Pietiſt, I had loſt all reliſh for railleſy.

Crito. You have too much natural ſenſe, Eraſtus, to be ſo ſoon ſtupified with pietiſm or devotion.

Eraſtus. Hold, Crito, is it in the good or in the bad ſenſe that pietiſm or devotion ſtupifies a man?

Crito. You stop me short, Erasmus; and I own, have again caught me in the confused, and speaking according to vulgar opinions.

Philo. You might have pleaded in your defence, Crito, that when you supposed devotion could stupify, it was in the bad sense of the word.

Crito. That, Philo, would have been but a poor defence; and I should have contradicted myself again.

Philo. And where lies the contradiction?

Crito. It would have been but too plain; I just now told Erasmus, that I gave him the appellation of a Devoté in the good sense only; and here I must have supposed him such in the bad; for a devotion that stupifies, is of that kind.

Erasmus. Crito doth himself justice with a very good grace. He has spared me the trouble of pointing out a contradiction in his discourse; on which occasion I should have shewn him no favour.

Crito. I am very sensible of that, Erasmus; and in return for your care, I promise you the same good office on the first opportunity.

Erasmus. Well; this is acting like friends; and I shall be very sensible of the obligation: but I see M. coming to look for me.

Philo. Will you leave us so soon then, Erasmus?

Erasmus. I depend on meeting you again, Philo: I promised to be at a friend's house at five; you had
made

made me forget the appointment; give me leave to be as good as my word.

Crito. We will; but on condition that you do the same to us, Erastus. Promise us then to meet at three to-morrow in our favourite walk.

Erastus. I will certainly be there, if I can.

D I A L O G U E II.

CRITO, PHILO, and ERASTUS.

Crito. **I** Thought I was too late, Philo; but I see Erastus is not yet come.

Philo. I think I see him at the bottom of this alley, in company with another, whom I do not know.

Crito. You are mistaken, Philo; he would have come alone; and not brought us an impertinent.

Philo. My eyes are better than yours then, Crito: see, he is now taking his leave of him, and coming up to us!

Crito. I perceive it, though confusedly; and am glad he doth not bring his companion with him; a fourth person would have been troublesome to us.

Philo. What think you of our friend, since yesterday's conversation?

Crito. I know not what I think of him, Philo; all I know of the matter is, that I have been all day impatient for the hour of meeting, and feared it at

the same time. But what do you think of him yourself?

Philo. I will tell you another time; he is near enough to over-hear us.

Crito, to Erastus. Well met, fir: we imagined ourselves here before you; but I find we were mistaken. Who was you with just now, pardon my curiosity; did you leave him on our account?

Erastus. I was with a friend, whom I can quit to join others, and without fear of his taking it amiss.

Philo. His name, Erastus?

Erastus. His name is Sermus.

Crito. I am not unacquainted with that name; and, if I am not mistaken, I knew him formerly at school.

Philo. May I be allowed to ask you, Erastus, whether he is a Pietist, or not?

Crito. I had the same curiosity; but laid a restraint on myself, being apprehensive of a question concerning the good, or bad sense.

Erastus. The world is pleased to call him so; but that gives him very little concern.

Crito. But tell me, my dear friend; what sort of people are those pretended Pietists? I have heard such different accounts of them, that I should be glad to find a man who could give me their true character.

Erastus.

Erastus. That is much such a question, *Crito*, as if I should ask you what sort of people are the Christians.

Crito. The Christians are so numerous, that an infinity of distinctions would be necessary for characterizing them.

Erastus. The Pietists, though not very numerous, are of so different characters, that we must make as many distinctions as there are persons. But I am poorly qualified to talk of them; for most of what I know, is only by report.

Philo. You are very far then from being engaged in their party, as several imagine.

Erastus. Engaged in a party, *Philo*! all good men, or, if you please, the Pietists, in the good sense of the word, detest the choice of a party or sect.

Philo. They seem, however, to affect a way of living very different from that of the rest of mankind.

Erastus. Dear *Philo*, you seem to attack them with a view of engaging me in their defence.

Crito. They would be in very good hands, had they such an advocate as you.

Philo. I own, I should take a pleasure in hearing you plead their cause.

Erastus. Were I as able an advocate as *Philo*, I would consider whether I ought to undertake it, or not.

Philo. You are always on the banter, *Eraſtus*; but, raillery apart, may we not be favoured with your thoughts on thoſe people?

Eraſtus. What can a man poſitively think, *Philo*, of people whom he knows only by the report of others. I own, all my thoughts of them will amount only to poſſibilities.

Philo. What mean you by that, *Eraſtus*?

Eraſtus. I think it very poſſible the world may be entirely miſtaken, in the judgment it forms of them: that thoſe whom it moſt deſpiſes, are perhaps the moſt valuable part of mankind; that thoſe whom it repreſents as fanatics, are perſons of the ſoundeſt ſenſe, and the niceſt diſcernment. I likewiſe think it very poſſible, that, among thoſe who bear that name, there may be characters of all ſorts: ſome well-meaning perſons, who are only apes of others; ſome who make a good beginning, and a bad ending: ſome who ſincerely do what they believe their conſciences require; and ſome, who are void of integrity, and after being ſeduced themſelves, ſeduce others. I farther think it poſſible for villains to aſſume the name and appearances of Pietiſm, that they may gain their ends with more privacy. Now, *Philo*, I aſk you in my turn, what think you of thoſe people? Will you be their advocate? You are more fit for that office than I am.

Philo. In that caſe, I muſt be equally fit to undertake good and bad cauſes.

Crito.

Crito. Erastus mawls us off; he lets us see what ridiculous questions we ask him about the Pietists.

Erastus. Suppose, Philo, that you and I were to go to a lapidary's shop, and upon the bare sight of the note on the bag, I should ask you, what you think of the true and false stones in it: What answer would you make me?

Philo. I own, I should think this question somewhat absurd. I perceive what you drive at, Erastus, and need not wait for the explanation of the riddle.

Erastus. You very well know that in the world men value themselves on justness of thought; have you never heard persons of that character deal in questions and answers still more ridiculous?

Crito. The ladies, Erastus, are particularly excellent in that art; if their discourse happens to fall on the poor Pietists, they paint them in fine colours.

Erastus. It would be pleasant to write down their conversation on that article.

Crito. I will, some time or other, give myself that diversion; but, if I am not mistaken, I see somebody coming towards us.

Erastus. What is his name, Crito?

Crito. Parmenas, one of our senators; certainly you must know him.

Erastus. I know him only by reputation; What is his character?

Philo. That of strongly interesting himself in what concerns himself; and little, or not at all, in what regards others.

Eraſtus. Do you not think, Philo, that most of those whom the world calls honest men, are of the same class?

Philo. I cannot tell, Eraſtus; but, I should be very much displeased with myself, were that my character.

Eraſtus. You think then, Philo, that you have a much more disinterested regard for your friends.

Philo. I am very sensible that self-love has some share in it; but methinks, I should be capable of serving my friends at the expence of my own interest.

Crito. Perhaps, Philo, it would be on condition, that interest was not of the greatest concern.

Philo. You set but little value on the friendship of your friends, Crito.

Crito. I set so great a value on yours, that I would not put it to too severe a trial; we must be careful of what we prize.

Philo. Till now I flattered myself with having in you a friend proof against all trials. Tell me then what dependence I ought to have on your friendship, since you have so little on mine.

Crito. It would be unjust, Philo, to hold up my friendship above its price. I will own frankly, that I have a friend to whom I refer all others. This friend

friend is self. I know not whether you are acquainted with him or not. Provided that friend and Philo never appear in competition, the latter may depend on my friendship in its utmost extent, and so far put it to the trial. Should I promise more in the affair of friendship, I own my professions would be mere quackery.

Philo. What do you think of a friend like this, Erastus?

Erastus. I think, Philo, I could more safely depend on his interested friendship, than on the protestations of disinterestedness made by several others. There are certainly more quacks in the business of friendship, than there are retailers of infallible remedies. Crito, at least, promises only what he can and will perform. Is not this plain dealing?

Crito. I find Philo is not very well satisfied with my offers of friendship; he is angry with me, perhaps, for disabusing him of the beautiful idea he entertained of it. However, I have done him a service, in thus discharging him of the obligation, under which he would have lain, to make me a return.

Philo. Were you not so severe, I could tell you that the confession you have made shall not at all diminish my friendship for you; but you will not take my word for it, so that I had better wait for an opportunity of proving what I say by facts.

Crito.

Crito. Do you think, Philo, that considerable services done to a friend, are always proofs of great disinterestedness? For my part, who do not commend myself, I find myself very capable of serving my friends to a certain point; self-love takes all coin for current; and I know, &c.

Eraſtus. Crito, have you read what M. *De la Rochefoucault* ſays on ſelf-love?

Crito. Yes, Eraſtus, and frequently found my own character there. Among other maxims, I the other day met with this: Self-love ſeems to forget itſelf, when we are labouring for another's advantage; but it is only lending upon uſury, under pretence of giving. The moſt diſintereſted love, ſays the ſame writer, is no better than a trade; an exchange of good offices in which ſelf-love always propoſes ſome gain to itſelf.

Eraſtus. I am afraid, my dear friends, if we make too cloſe an enquiry into friendſhip and ſelf-love, the latter will put the former to flight. Let us not endeavour to ſee too far into the matter; we may be undeceived in a manner that will mortify us.

Philo. Nothing could be better ſaid, Eraſtus; we have ſo many unavoidable opportunities of ſeeing ourſelves in a bad likenefs, why ſhould we ſeek for more? Let us not be ſuch enemies to our own repoſe.

Crito.

Crito. Do you not observe, Philo, that Erastus banters us? He speaks the language of self-love, which is not willing to be seen too near.

Philo. I am ready to excuse him, on condition that you both sup with me to-night.

Erastus. A very hard bargain!

Philo. I make another, Erastus; that we all three forget we have any self-love about us.

D I A L O G U E III.

PHILO, CRITO, and ERASTUS.

Philo. **H**A V E you been long here, Erastus?

Erastus. An hour and a quarter, if I am not mistaken.

Philo. You are a very early riser; we imagined we had done wonders in your favour, and should be here as soon as you.

Crito. You saw the sun rise, no doubt.

Erastus. I saw the day break, and found the sight well worth some hours sleep. Besides, the spring is so short a season, and at the same time so lovely in my eyes, that I was resolved to make the best of it.

Philo. It is a beautiful emblem of youth; which passes still quicker than the spring.

Erastus. And almost always before we think of making the best of it.

Crito.

Crito. Had any man but Erasmus talked in this manner, I should imagine he regretted his not having had his share of pleasure. In that case, it would be high time to make up for what has been lost.

Erasmus. I do really regret my not having made all the advantage I might have done of my youth; and my mistakes in the matter of pleasures.

Philo. You always confined yourself to such moderate pleasures, Erasmus, that one might charge you rather with taking too little than too much. When pleasures are innocent, they become youth perfectly well.

Erasmus. What do you mean by innocent pleasures, Philo?

Philo. Should I tell you, Erasmus, they are such pleasures as have nothing criminal, you will laugh at my definition.

Erasmus. I own it would make me smile; but I should be convinced you did not speak seriously.

Crito. By such a definition, Philo would have informed Erasmus that white is not black.

Philo. I am too well acquainted with Erasmus, to think of satisfying him so easily. But I own that, the more I seek for an exact definition of innocent pleasures, the farther I am from the discovery. I imagine I could better tell what they are not, than what they are.

Erasmus. I am not surprized at that; because the term innocent is negative, and expresses nothing in

in particular; unless it be that a thing is not criminal. It must be agreed that we often bring ourselves off by loose and indeterminate expressions, which clear up the difficulty almost as well, as when we say white is not black.

Philo. Men do not look so nicely into matters, Erastus.

Crito. We should, perhaps, be displeased, if certain truths were unfolded to our view.

Philo. However, Erastus, give us your thoughts concerning the nature of innocent pleasures; or, if you please, of such pleasures as are not criminal.

Erastus. Pray tell me, Philo, are not the terms Criminal and Culpable, synonymous?

Philo. Without doubt.

Erastus. Why is it not said that a pleasure is culpable, as well as that a pleasure is innocent?

Philo. Because the title of culpable is applicable only to a moral being; whereas pleasure is not properly a being, but the modification of a being.

Erastus. If a modification cannot be called culpable, can it be called innocent?

Philo. I own, Erastus, that Innocent being contrary to Culpable, neither of those terms can be applied to a modification.

Erastus. You told us, Philo, that pleasure is only a modification of a being.

Philo. I say so again, Erastus.

Erastus.

Erastus. You will grant then, Philo, that pleasure is, properly speaking, neither innocent nor criminal.

Philo. I am obliged to grant it.

Erastus. And that the terms Innocent and Criminal belong only to a moral being, of which pleasure is but a modification.

Philo. I must grant that too.

Erastus. On that foot, you will not for the future ask me for a definition of innocent pleasures, or such as are not criminal.

Philo. I know not, Erastus, how I can ask it; and yet I am not inclined to excuse you.

Crito. If I am not much mistaken, Erastus unravels the difficulty very well; but at the same time maliciously pretends he cannot get over it.

Erastus. I appeal to you, Crito; is not Philo more malicious than I, in forcing a poor trader out of his sphere, to entangle him in metaphysical questions, which do not fall under his cognizance? He can gain no honour by the victory. If in return, a man should drag Philo out of his element, and employ him in exchanges, arbitrations, the price of silks, &c. I should be in some measure revenged of him.

Philo. You are sufficiently so without, Erastus; and I see it is no easy matter to gain an advantage over you.

Crito. Erastus would fain give us the slip, I perceive, and decline telling us his opinion; but he
must

must explain himself, though against his will. It is not civil thus to drop one's friends on the road.

Erastus. Pray, Crito, take notice that Philo engaged me in the journey, by starting the question about innocent pleasures; it is his business to pursue the subject. Whereabouts did we leave off, Philo?

Philo. We had agreed that only a moral being can be criminal or innocent.

Crito. At that rate we are to discard the terms Innocent and Criminal, so much in use.

Erastus. I confess I should be pleased, if one could avoid employing them. They always carry something ambiguous, which obscures the truth. However, as terms stand for no more than the ideas fixt to them, they might still be admitted, provided men were first agreed on their true signification.

Philo. What sense would you give them, Erastus?

Erastus. Were there an absolute necessity of giving them any, I should say that pleasures become more or less innocent by the disposition of the heart which relishes them.

Crito. I am entirely of your mind, Erastus. I never was satisfied with the distinctions introduced by divines, in regard to lawful and unlawful pleasures.

Philo. I always thought some of them made the way too smooth, and others too rough.

Erastus. They have cut themselves out a great deal of work, which they might have avoided, had they

they referred every man to his own conscience for satisfaction in this point.

Philo. That must be owned, *Eraustus*; but on the other hand, is not this way of blind obedience to conscience, exposed to great dangers, and numberless allusions? We have seen men pretend to justify themselves in the most manifest licentiousness, under pretence that their consciences, as they said, accused them of nothing.

Eraustus. The best and surest way cannot secure a man from voluntary illusions. Do you know any way, *Philo*, that is inaccessible to illusion, and where a heart willing to be misled, may not be seduced?

Philo. I should be very much puzzled to find such an one; and am pretty well satisfied, that persons most skilful and penetrating in what relates to others, are the bubbles of their own illusions; but I see no remedy for this evil, nor how one can get clear of it.

Eraustus. Why, would you not look on conscience as the key to this labyrinth, *Philo*?

Philo. We must first enquire what conscience is.

Eraustus. Do not expect definitions of conscience from me; I shall leave that task to divines, if they think themselves equal to it: for my part, I am satisfied with the knowledge I have of it from my own sentiments and experience. You asked me the other day, *Crito*, under what able master's tuition I had placed myself. I shall now answer your question: that

that master is conscience, I neither know nor will have any other.

Philo. You surprise me, Erastus; I know not whether I am to take your word for it or not.

Crito. I should mistrust any one else, who talked in this manner; but Erastus is a man of too much veracity to be suspected of dissimulation. I perceive I shall soon have a very different opinion of that master than I have hitherto entertained.

Erastus. I know not whether you are serious or not, Crito; but this master is near enough to overhear you.

Crito. I am very serious, Erastus; and am extremely angry with myself for not having hitherto set a greater value on such a master, nor given attention to his lessons. I see what might be obtained with most ease, is most neglected.

Philo. You will take it ill perhaps if I interrupt your conversation, with asking the hour of the day.

Erastus. I think it is time to go home with Crito, and make him treat us with a breakfast.

Crito. I am a pleasant fellow. I had really forgot what I promised you last night, and did not consider Erastus was here long before us; but that is your own fault, Erastus, and therefore blame nobody but yourself for it.

DIALOGUE IV.

CRITO, PHILO, and ERASTUS.

Crito. WE are first to-day.

Philo. Erastus must have over-slept himself, or is detained by some unseasonable visiter.

Crito. Would you imagine, Philo, that since the arrival of Erastus, I cannot pass one day without seeing him; though he is pretty severe upon me, his conversation becomes every day more agreeable to me.

Philo. His change has not produced in him the effect I expected. I was told he was grown gloomy, melancholy, and unfit for all conversation. I never saw him so gay, nor behave himself in so engaging a manner.

Crito. Though he has always been gay, it was not in so free and easy a manner. I know not what can be the cause of it; but it is visible he has a fund of serenity within, which, if one dared, one would envy him.

Philo. Were all the Pietists like him, every man would be one, and the appellation would be no longer a bugbear.

Crito. I do not know that, Philo. Men would willingly enjoy his gaiety and serenity; but I question whether they would, like him, obey the voice
of

of conscience in every particular, and on all occasions. Do we know what it has already cost him, and what it may cost him hereafter?

Philo. Not I, Crito; but methinks it is the duty of every honest man to obey his conscience, and I should be very sorry to disobey mine.

Crito. Some time ago I could have talked like you, Philo; but I have since observed that I endeavoured to work myself into a state of insensibility, that I might not hear its voice. But do not I see Erasius coming this way?

Philo. It is he, unless my eyes deceive me.

Crito. I grow a little impatient to see him, and engage him a second time on the subject of yesterday's conversation.

Philo. That of innocent pleasures, or that of conscience?

Crito. Both; though taking the matter right, they come to one and the same.

Philo. How so, Crito?

Crito. Because it is the business of every man's conscience to determine what may be innocent for him.

Philo. You seemed to jest the other day, Crito, when you asked under what able master Erasius had studied; but I see you are in good earnest taking the way to become learned in the same school.

Crito. Banter as much as you please, Philo; I heartily wish I had courage enough, or that the work
would

would not cost me too much; you should then see whether I would not attempt it.

Philo. But should a philosopher like you, Crito, be stopt by difficulties? Where would be the courage to attempt what gives no trouble?

Crito. Your raillery, dear Philo, is a good lesson for me; and when my courage increases, I shall be more obliged to you than you imagine. (To *Eraustus.*) My dear friend, you are come very seasonably, to assist me in defending myself against a man who attacks me vigorously.

Eraustus. Is it a formal duel, or some malicious surprize?

Crito. There is a good deal of malice in the affair; and Philo is the aggressor.

Philo. I am an aggressor, to whom, by his own confession, he has more obligation than is imagined. Reconcile that, *Eraustus.*

Eraustus. I understand neither of you, except you explain yourselves.

Crito. I'll tell you, *Eraustus*; we were on the topick of yesterday's conversation; I mean conscience and innocent pleasures. I asserted that they both came to the same; because it is the business of every man's conscience to direct him in that point.

Eraustus. I think your definition very just, Crito.

Crito. I met with a very civil return for it; he has bantered me on my progress in the same school with you; and I frankly acknowledge, I wanted
nothing

nothing but courage, and was afraid the work would be too painful. This was sufficient for drawing a new thrust upon me. He has been laughing at the greatness of my courage, which dares attempt only what will give me no trouble.

Eraſtus. Really, Crito, I think Philo does you a good office in attacking you after this manner.

Crito. True; if I knew how to make my advantage of it.

Philo. We were talking ill of you, Eraſtus, before you came.

Eraſtus. It is not obliging to speak ill of one's friends in their absence, unless the discourse is continued before their faces.

Philo. We were observing that piety had made no alteration in your usual gaiety, and that you had not put on the sour gloomy air of the generality of devotees.

Eraſtus. Is there any necessity of joining the idea of sourness and gloominess with that of piety? I must own I see no connection between them.

Crito. It is the common opinion; and most people tacitly think as much.

Eraſtus. Hold there, Crito; it is an impression which we receive in our infancy, from the manner in which we have been catechised on the articles of religion or piety.

Crito. You have hit it, Eraſtus; the care which seems to be taken for inspiring children with sentiments

ments of piety, is what gives them the greatest aversion to it.

Eraſtus. Thus hypocrites and diſſemblers are formed, who are diſpoſed to give themſelves ſome conſolation by religion, or the appearance of it, while they are at an immense diſtance from all that conſtitutes its reality.

Philo. However, men profeſs a ſovereign hatred of diſſimulation and hypocrify; for which reaſon they cannot bear the falſe devotees.

Eraſtus. The world has good reaſon for not bearing falſe devotees. I will venture to affirm, they are the moſt deſpicable of men; but moſt of thoſe honeſt men, who value themſelves on deteſting diſſimulation, may poſſibly have a ſovereign hatred for it in others, without perceiving what ſhare they have of it themſelves. You muſt own that the wiſeſt, moſt polite part of the world, and moſt regular in appearance, is a ſet of men in diſguiſe, who endeavour to impoſe one on another, not one of them daring to ſhew himſelf ſuch as he really is.

Philo. If you give the wiſeſt, and moſt regular part of the world ſuch a character; what will you ſay, Eraſtus, of the fooliſh diſorderly part, and ſuch as are entirely devoted to their paſſions?

Eraſtus. I will ſay, Philo, that the diſtance between the wiſe and the fooliſh world, is in reality very inconfiderable. I can ſpeak by experience, having been formerly an actor in the wiſe world: ſelf-love

to the grand spring, which equally puts both into motion. The only difference is, that in the wise world, self-love has learnt the art of disguising itself, and dressing itself in all manner of colours, so as to pass unknown. Gravity, reserve, an air of modesty, complaisance, generosity, a readiness to do services, an air of disinterestedness, and even of freedom, are the several colours, in which it finds its account. If any one chances to discover it under these disguises, it conceals itself in another manner; it declaims against itself, detects several of its own artifices; and ridicules itself with so good a grace, that nobody imagines this artful passion is the actor. This, Philo, is the side of the medal, which gives us the character of the wise world.

Philo. Pray let me see that which presents the character of the foolish world.

Erasmus. Here it is, Philo. Self-love is very poorly clothed: it excites the passions, without being at the trouble of disguising them, or giving them new names. It boldly shews itself capricious, passionate, voluptuous, revengeful, and even impious; avarice and envy are the only vices it is not willing to own; and that not without some reason. To do the wise world justice, those two excellent qualities meet with much better protection there than in the foolish world. Here now is the world masked, and the world unmasked; which of them is in your opinion the more valuable?

Philo. I should be very much puzzled to answer that question.

Crito. Were I to give my opinion, I should allow the world unmasked the preference: I own, it is not so agreeable for society as the other; but, at least, it deceives nobody. I find in the world masked, the character of a cheat, which I cannot bear.

Philo. You make a handsome compliment to *Eraustus*, who has owned himself once an actor in the wise world.

Eraustus. Be not afraid of giving me offence on that score; had I not discovered the falsity and knavery of it, I should have continued to act there without knowing it.

Philo. Pray who has disgusted you of it, *Eraustus*?

Eraustus. The very master I mentioned to you already.

Philo. What! conscience?

Eraustus. The same, dear *Philo*; you seem surprised at it.

Philo. I can hardly believe it.

Eraustus. How! Can you not conceive that a witness, who resides within us, and follows us wherever we go, may easily unveil to us our most secret intentions, if we will but give him the hearing?

Philo. I begin to comprehend the matter.

Eraustus. And that he may every moment give us the lie, in regard to what we would appear to be, at the expence of truth?

Philo.

Philo. That is evident by experience.

Eraſtus. If he ſpeaks with ſo much ſincerity, even when we are afraid to hear him, how far will he lead us, when once we conſent to be directed by him ?

Philo. How far do you think he can lead us, Eraſtus ?

Eraſtus. Not only till he ſhews us within ourſelves a fund of falſehood, a perpetual diſguiſe, a deſire of paſſing for what we are not ; but even till he lets us ſee the foundation and principle of our beſt diſpoſitions, and fineſt qualities, are no better than a moſt refined ſelf-love, and a real idolatry.

Crito. Well, Philo ; had not I ſome reaſon to ſay juſt now, that a man muſt have a great deal of courage to give himſelf up to the direction of Eraſtus's maſter ?

Eraſtus. Pray tell me, Philo ; is not the wiſe world eſſentially the ſame at full length, as it is in little ?

Philo. I think ſo, Eraſtus.

Eraſtus. You will not therefore aſk me a ſecond time, how it is poſſible that the witneſs in queſtion, or, if you pleaſe, conſcience, can enable us to diſcover what the wiſe world is at full length. That queſtion is ſufficiently answered, by his enabling us to diſcover in ourſelves what it is in little.

Philo. I begin to underſtand how far conſcience can lead us, provided we conſent to its direction ; and that by unveiling us to ourſelves, it likewise un-

veils others to us. But might it not be objected, that the diversity among men is so great, that one cannot judge of another. We see, for example, a great deal of difference between the several actors of the wise world.

Eraustus. If there be any difference or diversity among them, as cannot be denied, it is only in accidents and outward forms, and not in the substance or hidden principle. While man knows himself by the form or accidents only, he cannot by that means know other men; because they are in that respect very different one from another. But when conscience has brought him to know himself, by the substance and principle, he then knows the substance and principle of those of his own class; and it is easy for him to discern them through their apparent diversity. You see now, Philo, why I advanced that proposition: that the wise world is essentially at full length, what it is in little; and that the knowledge of the latter, as to its essence, is sufficient for giving us the knowledge of the former.

Crito. You pass in the world for a merchant, *Eraustus*.

Eraustus. I pretend to nothing more, *Crito*.

Crito. I affirm, that you are more a philosopher than we, and that we have no right to the title.

Eraustus. What do you mean by being a philosopher?

Crito.

Crito. I mean, having what is expressed by those words written over the gate of the temple of Delphos : Know thyself.

Eraſtus. If that is your description of the true philosopher, I own I would fain be one.

Crito. Methinks, Eraſtus, you have already made a considerable progress, and are an honour to your master. If you have had no other but conscience, he must be a great philosopher ; and it is a quality, which I did not know belonged to him.

Philo. You see, Crito, a man may make new discoveries every day.

Crito. You will take me for a very gross philosopher, should I tell you it is time to think of the discovery of a dinner. However, I venture to put you in mind of it, at the hazard of passing for what I really am : and it is one of the maxims of this master's philosophy, not to pretend to pass for what one is not.

Eraſtus. If you follow his maxims so exactly, even in the smallest matters, Crito, you will make great progress in a little time. I am willing to be gross too on those terms, and make no scruple of telling you it is dinner-time.

D I A L O G U E V.

PHILO, CRITO, and ERASTUS.

Crito. **Y**OU come late, Erastus; has any body detained you?

Erastus. Yes, Crito, I have been detained by a visit, which I thought very long. Do you know that you were partly the subject of the conversation? Our conferences begin to make a noise; people are curious to know on what our discourses turn; they fear I shall seduce you.

Philo. Pray who is so charitable, as to interest himself so much, in what concerns us?

Erastus. It is N——, a relation of Crito, one of the gravest actors in the wise world. He began with complimenting me on my pretended wisdom; but yet professed a great fear of Pietism, and the pernicious sentiments to which it may carry a man. I asked him what he meant by Pietism, and whether he took the term in the good or bad sense? That question puzzled him: he was not willing to own he had charged me with being a hypocrite or false devotee; on the other hand, he was apprehensive I should ask him why Piety was dangerous, and must necessarily lead a man to pernicious sentiments? He knew not how to get off. It happened luckily that somebody came in, who interrupted

rupted the discourse, and relieved us-both; for I was perhaps as much in pain as he. It does not become a young man, like me, to puzzle so grave and distinguished a man as N——. I am not malicious enough to divert myself at his expence.

Crito. You did not treat us so tenderly, Erastus; and I have observed you, more than once, laugh maliciously at the confusion you gave us.

Erastus. I did it without any scruple: for besides that the quality of old fellow-collegians allows a certain liberty, I considered you as persons capable of making an advantage of such confusions; and my conjecture was well grounded. But as to those honest gentlemen of N——'s stamp, they only give them pain without the least profit.

Crito. I have not yet told you, Erastus, that N—— attacked me the other day on your account. He had been informed of our frequent interviews, and was concerned to see me drawn into an intimacy with one, who has the character of singularity. I had like to have burst out into laughing at the mention of singularity; and had a mind to tell him, that way of speaking was fit only for old women and schoolmasters, who have a veneration for every syllable of their catechism, as somewhat sacred. But I commanded myself; and with good reason; for he would have been non-plus'd, and, as you say, without knowing how to make his advantage of it. I only replied, with an air of rail-
C 5 lery,

lery, that Philo and I should perhaps have better success in converting Erastus from Pietism to worldliness, than he in converting us from worldliness to Pietism. He was beginning to wish success to our enterprize, but his prudence made him stop short. He was sensible such a wish was neither suitable to his rank nor gravity; so that he only advised me to be on my guard against so dangerous a friend.

Philo. Whither are you going in such haste, Erastus?

Erastus. I am leaving you as fast as possible, that I may neither seduce nor be seduced.

Crito. Dear Erastus, be not so unlucky. You must own you do not much fear us; it would be our business to fly. I am apprehensive you have gone farther with us, than we can go with you; but I know not what to make of you, and have reason to suspect you carry some magical charm about you; for the more I propose to avoid you, the more impatient I am to meet you again.

Erastus. At that rate, I must be a piece of a forcerer; Crito discovers a quality in me, with which I was entirely unacquainted. But let us not speak too loud; if some good woman should over-hear us, I should soon be sentenced to the stake.

Crito. Are you sure, Erastus, that you are not, in several people's way of thinking, a more dangerous

gerous man, than the forcerers who are burnt; or, if you please, were formerly burnt; for that practice is now out of fashion.

Philo. Is it allowable, Crito, to proceed to invectives without proofs? You will be obliged to make it appear presently, how Erastus can pass for so dangerous a man.

Crito. I carry the proofs within me, Philo. All the forcerers together could not have made the least of those impressions, which the sight of Erastus has produced in me.

Philo. But are those impressions so dangerous?

Crito. Very dangerous, Philo; as they tend to make a man mistrust himself.

Erastus. That indeed is very dangerous; since in that situation a man will not know whom to trust. But are you in earnest, Philo? Do you really begin to mistrust so good a friend as self? You was saying a little while ago, that you made all other friends give place to him; but if diffidence once creeps in there, I will not be answerable for the consequence.

Philo. Pray, tell me, Crito, would you mistrust a man, of whose honesty you are well assured?

Crito. No, certainly.

Philo. Are you dishonest then, Crito, that you begin to mistrust yourself?

Crito. You will laugh at me, Philo, if I tell you I find I am not over-stocked with honesty.

Eraſtus. Take care, Crito, you do not give us too bad an opinion of yourſelf. Philo may be ſcandalized at it. For my part, I ſhall always be pleaſed to ſee you endeavour to paſs only for what you are. It is an introduction to the philoſophy, of which we were talking the other day.

Philo. But tell me, Crito, with whom have you dealt diſhoneſtly, and on what occaſions?

Crito. If I begin with acting ſo with myſelf, may I not treat others in the ſame manner?

Philo. I did not take you for ſuch a man till now.

Crito. Nor I myſelf, Philo, till I came into company with Eraſtus. Judge now, whether I had not ſome reaſon for ſaying he might paſs for a dangerous man, and much more ſo than a forcerer can be.

Eraſtus. I knew not what I can have ſaid to you, Crito, that could make you doubt of your own honeſty.

Crito. You have ſaid nothing to me on that ſubject, Eraſtus.

Philo. Why then do you maliciously charge him with it?

Eraſtus. Perhaps the magic virtue, which I uſe, has produced that effect, independent of the converſation.

Crito. That is the caſe, Eraſtus; it is not your arguments that have cured me of the good opinion

opinion I entertained of myself. Had you attacked me that way, I should have had an answer ready. It is a secret impression, a something which I cannot name, from which I would hide myself; but its language is so true, that it is not in one's power to contradict it.

Philo. Has this something discovered a want of sincerity or integrity within you?

Crito. That is what it upbraids me with every moment; and I cannot deny the justness of its reproaches.

Philo. If it does you a good office that way, it is unhappily to the prejudice of your repose.

Crito. Most certainly, Philo; and it is no small mortification to me, when I imagine myself very generous, to find an interest concealed under an apparent generosity. This is only the fair side of me; were I to shew you some others, you would be very much surprized at them.

Eraustus. Philo perhaps would; but I imagine I should not.

Philo. Why that distinction, Eraustus?

Eraustus. Because I have discovered in myself a fund or principle of disguise, double-dealing, and refined hypocrisy, which hinder my being surprized at what I may see in another. You have not forgot, Philo, the picture I drew the other day of the wise world; it was my own, taken from the original; I let you see plainly enough, that I had

had not learnt what the wise world is at full length, till my own experience had taught me what it is in little.

Philo. I know not, *Erastus*, whether I am to take your word for the ill you say of yourself. I imagined your modesty made me exaggerate in that manner, having always seen you very unlike what you call your own picture.

Erastus. I shall take you at your word, *Philo*. Is appearing to the eyes of others, very different from what one really is, being sincere or disguised?

Philo. Disguised, if I am not mistaken.

Erastus. You have seen me, you say, very unlike the picture I give for my own.

Philo. I shall always say so.

Erastus. Am not I more capable than another of judging, whether that picture resembles me or not; especially when it represents me in an ugly likeness?

Philo. I grant it, *Erastus*.

Erastus. Now I declare it is drawn to the life; therefore, when you saw me entirely unlike it, you saw a man in disguise.

Philo. You force me, *Erastus*, to subscribe to a thing, which in the main I disown, and I cannot believe that

Erastus. *Philo* is resolved, whatever comes of it, to judge charitably, as the phrase is; that is, never to believe what any one may say to his neighbour's

neighbour's disadvantage. But, methinks, when a man speaks of himself, his word may be taken.

Crito. Philo would answer, that modesty may induce a man to speak worse of himself than he really deserves.

Erastus. I have no pretension to that modesty, which induces a man to speak worse of himself than he deserves, Crito; I willingly leave that to the wise world, which it suits better than me. I am so far from it, that I am persuaded my real character always exceeds what I can say of myself in that way.

Philo. I do not see, Erastus, why modesty should suit the wise world, as you have painted it.

Erastus. Yes, Philo; the modesty, of which we are speaking, suits it perfectly well. If we take a near view of it, we shall see it at bottom no better than real dissimulation, the art of appearing what one is not; a vanity much more refined than that which prompts a man to speak well of himself; and that it proceeds only from blindness, or a want of acquaintance with one's self.

Crito. You give a pretty good account of my lady Modesty, Erastus. You may run the hazard of drawing great numbers on your back by this liberty: so many authors, modest in their prefaces; so many ladies, excessively modest in their compliments; so many candidates for places and employments;

plays, who know how to secure votes by their modesty.

Eraſtus. What ſay you, Philo? Do not all thoſe ſeveral parts belong to the wiſe world? And had not I good reaſon for leaving it in poſſeſſion of modeſty, as an annex to its domain?

Philo. I own, that modeſty, when taken in this ſenſe, entirely belongs to it. But may not modeſty be allowed its good ſenſe, as well as Pietiſm, and ſuch a one as might make it ſuit good men?

Eraſtus. If modeſty ought to have a good ſenſe, we muſt give it ſome other name; in that ſenſe, I know of none proper for it, but thoſe of truth, ſincerity, and ingenuousneſs, in ſhewing one's deformities, as well as beauties. This is the modeſty that ſuits good men. But, after all, as the world has entertained a quite contrary idea of it, and as in that ſenſe it cannot ſuit good men, they will willingly quit all claim to it, in favour of the wiſe world, to which they alſo leave the reputation of being modeſt, as an appanage; contenting themſelves with the reality, without having the reputation of it.

Philo. It is eaſily conceived, that modeſty, taken in the bad ſenſe, is artful vanity, and refined diſſimulation. But I do not ſo eaſily underſtand what you added, that both proceed from blindneſs,

ness, or a want of being acquainted with one's self.

Erastus. Pray tell me, Philo, how would you call a man, who should accuse himself of faults, which he thinks he has not, and deny the good qualities which he believes he has?

Philo. I am of opinion he might justly be called a liar, if things are to be distinguished by their true names.

Erastus. And how would you call a man who should speak in that manner, with a design that his neighbour should think quite the contrary of what he says of himself?

Philo. A hypocrite, or I am mistaken.

Erastus. Should such a man play this part, in order to gain the reputation of modesty, and thus facilitate his promotion to some post, or marry a fortune, pray what title would you give him?

Philo. That of a cheat, in my opinion.

Erastus. Should any one undertake to shew this man, that notwithstanding his seeming modesty, he is at the bottom a hypocrite, and a cheat, how do you think he would be received?

Crito. Very roughly, perhaps, if our man chanced to be

Philo. Without pushing matters too far, one may judge he would complain he was highly injured, and that he bore no resemblance to the picture.

Erastus.

Erastus. That would be a proof that he knew not himself, but was absolutely blind as to the reality of his own dispositions.

Philo. That admits of no reply.

Erastus. Well then, Philo, you will not ask me again, how a modesty that induces a man to speak worse of himself than he deserves, or thinks he deserves, can be the result of blindness, or of a want of knowing himself.

Philo. I am entirely of your mind, in that point, *Erastus*.

Erastus. Since we are all agreed, let us walk to town; it is very cloudy, and we may be well washed in a quarter of an hour.

D I A L O G U E VI.

CRITO, PHILO, and ERASTUS.

Crito. **B**EFORE you came, *Erastus*, *Philo* and I were employed in wrangling.

Philo. *Crito* is the aggressor to-day; he began to attack me on a piece of raillery of yours, as he calls it, about judging charitably. He has maintained, that your design was to ridicule the vulgar opinion concerning charitable judgments.

Erastus. In reality I had it a little in view. That opinion misleads so many, even good men, that

that it were to be wished, what is true in it was distinguished from what is false.

Crito. I know some, who are extremely well pleased with themselves, for judging charitably of all the world, and think themselves obliged to have a good opinion of every man in particular.

Erastus. At that rate, the case will be the same in regard to charity as modesty; both of them will be grounded on falsehood; a man must be blind, in order to be charitable; and a dissembler, in order to be modest. A fine notion of charity and modesty!

Crito. To look at them in that point of view, nothing appears so ridiculous: I very much doubt whether the wise world, which realizes the idea of them so well in practice, is able to maintain it in speculation. Here again the foolish world has the advantage over the wise world. If it is neither really charitable nor modest, at least it makes no profession of being so: there is less contrariety between what it practises, and what it professes.

Philo. There is not one actor in the wise world, who would adopt the idea of charity and modesty, established on falsehood; they would all heartily reject it.

Erastus. I know that, dear Philo, by my own experience. Had any man offered it me in that manner, when I acted a part there, I should certainly have laughed at him. Nor is it less true, that I
was

was not then either really charitable or modest, and that I desire however to pass for such. A suspicion of the contrary would have touched me to the quick. What think you, Philo, is not this being a hypocrite and dissembler? You could not believe me the other day, when I threw those fine qualities into my picture; but attributed it to my modesty. You will now be undeceived in that point, and will, no doubt, take it for granted, that the question between us is not concerning modesty, but sincerity and truth.

Philo. I do not understand you, Erastus. I never in my life heard a man talk so sincerely. I have met with several, who readily accused themselves of being hasty and passionate, or lazy and indolent; but to suspect them of being void of charity and sincerity, would have vexed them to the soul.

Crito. Might I take the liberty, I should say I suspect Erastus of an amicable fraud.

Erastus. I beg you will explain yourself, Crito.

Crito. My suspicion is this; that when Erastus pretended to draw his own picture, he designed to draw mine, and spare me the confusion of doing it myself. He, without doubt, observed I had a mind to begin, without having courage enough to proceed; and that I miscarried at the first stroke, which produced only a confused draught of appa-

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rent generosity. If that be the case, I am heartily obliged to him for the favour.

Erastus. No, dear Crito; I had no thoughts of you, when I drew my picture. I thought truth and justice required that confession from me, as a sort of reparation of my former disguises. Sooner or later we must come to this resolution. Truth will lose none of its rights; what we defraud it of in this life, must be restored in the other, with inexpressible confusion.

Crito. That is an important truth.

Erastus. By a sense of this truth, we divest ourselves of falsehood, and the appearances of religion, and dare appear as imperfect as we really are, and as truth will one day shew us to be.

Crito. What you said the other day, Erastus, is certainly true; that, in order to know thoroughly what the world is at full length, it is sufficient to know in the same manner what it is in little.

Erastus. I now call to mind what we were saying a few moments since, concerning charitable judgments; they are made to consist in judging of others, as we would have them judge of us, were we in their place.

Philo. Do you think that would be just, Erastus?

Erastus. Very just, without doubt. One condition only is requisite in this case; which is, to know whether the person to be judged would consent

sent to be known to the bottom, and that another should judge of him only by what he is; or whether, on the contrary, he desires to be judged favourably, to the prejudice of truth.

Crito. Here I must do myself justice. Till this time, had I been to make the choice, I should certainly have chosen the latter. I do not know, *Eraustus*, whether you have me always in view or not: but you describe me very well in the character last mentioned.

Eraustus. Without having you in view, *Crito*, I may often hit on your character, by reason of the conformity of my own experience with yours.

Philo. *Crito* has interrupted us, *Eraustus*. Let us know what you drive at.

Eraustus. I say, that if the maxim of judging others as we would be judged, is just and equitable, it ought to be observed by such as are just and equitable. What say you to that, *Philo*?

Philo. I think that, as you say, in order to judge equitably, a man should be equitable himself.

Eraustus. Do you think a man of equity, if he was blind, for example, would require others to judge he has fine eyes?

Philo. That would be a pleasant fancy indeed.

Eraustus. But how many, who are blind in regard to religion and themselves, would pass for clear-sighted persons?

Crito.

Crito. There is no need of going farther than me, to find one of this kind.

Eraſtus. The advantage you have over them, *Crito*, is, that you know yourself in that point.

Philo. *Crito* will tire out my patience with his practice of interrupting. I would fain hear *Eraſtus's* conclusions.

Eraſtus. The conclusion is, that in order to set things in a clearer light, we ought to speak, not of judging charitably, but of judging equitably. Not that in reality charity can be contrary to equity; but it is so in the vulgar opinion, which requires a man to blind himself, in order to judge charitably.

Philo. That distinction, I confess, is proper for solving the difficulty.

Eraſtus. If I am a man of equity, for example, I would have others judge of me only by what I am, or by what they may know of me. For the same reason, I will judge of others only by what they are, or by what I evidently know of them.

Philo. That is equitable.

Eraſtus. In all doubtful particulars or circumstances, I will judge only by probabilities or possibilities, and suspend my judgment, without giving myself the trouble of justifying or condemning.

Philo. This would be acting judiciously, and keeping out of the danger of being deceived.

Crito.

Crito. To know how to suspend one's judgment is an admirable secret; but I think nothing so difficult.

Eraſtus. The philosophers pretend to be masters of it; I know not whether they really are or not.

Crito. I believe, that in that, as in other things, they know but little of themselves. I can speak by experience.

Philo. Is it not too rash to judge of others by one's self, *Crito*?

Crito. I except such as have taken philosophy by the right end, and entered on it with the practice of that admonition, Know thyself. Do I wrong those who have not entered in this manner, when I say they know not themselves? This is just as if a man should find fault with me, for saying the Africans are not white.

Eraſtus. Methinks the sun shines hot enough here to make us Africans. I am for seeking some shady place; and believe we shall be better accommodated in the house, than any where else.

DIALOGUE VII.

CRITO, PHILO, and ERASTUS.

Philo. **W**E are here very early. I doubt Erastus is not come before us.

Crito. Your doubt will soon be removed, if that is he whom I see under that tree.

Philo. If it is not Erastus, it is one very like him; we shall soon be satisfied as to that point.

Crito. Methinks, Philo, these walks will lose at least three parts in four of their beauty, when Erastus leaves us.

Philo. Doth he talk of going? I shall be extremely sorry to part with him, though we must be resigned, since we cannot keep him.

Crito. He talks of setting out in less than a fortnight. I hope we shall prevail with him to stay three weeks; and even that is but a short time.

Philo. Now I see him very plainly. It is he; he rises, and is coming towards us.

Crito. Dear Erastus, we must own ourselves very much to blame for disturbing your profound reverie.

Erastus. I may hereafter have time enough for my reveries, but shall not always have the pleasure of conversing with Crito and Philo.

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Philo.

Philo. We were talking of a piece of ill news, Erastus; we were upon your journey; and I could not pardon your thoughts of leaving your friends so soon.

Erastus. Let us not talk of that, I beseech you, Philo; it is a thing not yet ready for execution; we shall have an opportunity of seeing one another several times before I go.

Crito. Perhaps, Erastus, you design to give us the slip, when we least think of it; but we shall prevent that, by having a watchful eye over you.

Erastus. Do you know I have another journey to take before I leave you for good and all?

Crito. I guess that journey is to the country seat of N—— your relation. Though it were but for a few days, Erastus, it would be so much time stolen from us.

Erastus. He would have made me promise to spend eight days with him, but I engaged only for four. Besides, I believe N—— would not oppose me, if I should invite you thither, during my stay at his house.

Philo. Nor shall we oppose the motion, Erastus; the bargain is made, though I am not so particularly acquainted with N—— as Crito is.

Crito. You will not guess, Erastus, what question I was asked yesterday about you. I was in company with Fortunatus, a young gentleman, to whom I communicated your definition of the wise world

world and the foolish world. He immediately declared himself a member of the latter, and in that did himself justice. While we were thus employed, Parmenas came in, and desired to know the subject of our discourse. We told him: he was struck dumb; but could not step into the class that was proper for him, as Fortunatus had done. The rest of the company, however, placed him here; one half quarter of an hour's conversation with him was sufficient for concluding him an actor in the wise world. He took some notice of it, and was uneasy. Being thus embarrassed, he took it in his head to ask me to what world you belonged, since you would not range yourself in either class. I told him I had not yet required you to explain yourself on that subject. No doubt, says he, Erastus places himself in the devout or pious world. Not so neither, said I; and then I gave him the good and bad sense of those terms. To what world can he belong then? asked my gentleman, with some warmth. Perhaps, replied I, smiling, he is a man of the other world. In fine, to put an end to the dispute, I promised I would get an answer to his question from your own mouth.

Erastus. The title of a man of the other world is too good for one, who, like me, is still much attached to this.

Diogenes. *Crito.*

world

Crito. To what world shall I say you belong then, dear Erasius?

Erasius. I am a man lately escaped from the wise world, and who endeavours to keep at a distance from it, in order to make my way to the sincere world.

Philo. How, Erasius! have you not long been in the class of sincere men?

Erasius. That is what I aim at, dear Philo; and that is the tendency of all the lessons I receive from the master, whom we spoke of. But I must tell you, he gives me ideas of sincerity very different from those I once entertained of it. I should have imagined myself a phoenix in point of sincerity, had I always spoken exactly what I thought, without diminution or exaggeration. This would have been a considerable point gained; but entire sincerity goes much farther. It is not confined to acting sincerely with one's neighbour; its chief tendency is to make us deal so with ourselves.

Philo. How much were it to be wished we could meet with great numbers truly sincere in the first respect! Are not you too hard to please, Erasius, in not being satisfied with that, but aspiring at something more? For my part, I confess ingenuously, I have no clear idea of what you call dealing sincerely with one's self.

Crito. I own, Philo, I do conceive some idea of it; but it is from my experience of the contrary. I

catch

catch myself every moment; and it is what I the other day called not acting honestly with one's self.

Erastus. Nothing is more hard to define than sincerity with one's self; it must be learnt by experience. It is so nice a point, that without a very tender conscience, it is impossible to explain it. Conscience becomes tender in proportion as it is obeyed. The more we listen to it, the more distinctly it speaks. It is invariably on the side of truth, and discovers a falshood in us, of which we should never have thought ourselves capable; but all this is not done without our full consent.

Crito. I perceive I do not deal sincerely with myself, for example, when I have a glimpse of some truth, that condemns me, and would carry me farther than I am willing to go: I very well know how to turn my eyes from it, and set my mind at ease by arguments that justify my conduct.

Erastus. Have you but lately discovered in yourself an aversion to truth, Crito?

Crito. Not till your arrival, Erastus.

Erastus. Was you in a more happy situation in that respect before?

Crito. I cannot tell, Erastus. But the truth is, I did not discover in myself any falshood, or opposition to truth. I did not even imagine I resisted it; and should any one have charged me with so doing, he would have touched me to the quick. Now I want no accuser in that particular but myself.

Eraſtus. I ſhould think, Crito, that your experience of reſiſting truth, is a proof that it makes ſome progreſs in you.

Crito. How can that be, Eraſtus? Doth not ſuch a reſiſtance oppoſe the progreſs truth might make? I do not underſtand you, unleſs you explain yourſelf better.

Eraſtus. It is true, did truth meet with no oppoſition in the heart, it would make a much quicker progreſs. I ſpoke thus by way of comparison with your former diſpoſition; and my meaning was, that when you perceived no reſiſtance within you in regard to truth, it was proof that you was not vigorously attacked by it; and that you had, perhaps, placed ſo many barriers between it and yourſelf, that it could be heard only at a great diſtance.

Crito. Now I comprehend you, Eraſtus. You let me ſee that thoſe, who imagine they make no reſiſtance to truth, are at the greateſt diſtance from it, or directly turn their backs on it.

Philo. It muſt be owned that conſcience is but little known in the world, though every one pretends to have one.

Crito. Nothing is ſo much talked of. A man without conſcience, or who ſhould paſs for ſuch, would be deteſted by all mankind, whatever other qualifications he might be ſuppoſed poſſeſſed of.

Eraſtus. I am perſuaded every man has a conſcience; but aſk each man in particular, of what ſervice

service it is to him, and what use he makes of it, and he will be puzzled for an answer. Is not the reply we find in one of Æsop's Fables, applicable on this occasion? He is speaking of a man, who hid a treasure in the earth, without making any other use of it; upon which, another says to him, put a stone in its room, it will be full as valuable to you.

Crito. Among what we call honest men, there are several, who, would they but speak the truth, might say they make no more use of their conscience, than if they had none.

Erasmus. In that point, they religiously observe St. Paul's advice concerning riches, and all things of this world.

Philo. But yet are there not several, whose conscience prevents their falling into great disorders?

Erasmus. There are indeed great numbers, who forbear giving into gross disorders; but it is a question, whether that effect is always produced by conscience. Self-love is a very persuasive casuist; especially when it has to do with honest men, it has good reasons to offer them, with which they are easily satisfied. It shews them the damage they would do themselves in the world, the contempt into which they would fall, if they indulged themselves in such excesses, as are fit only for the dregs of the people. These are weighty reasons, to which they are obliged to yield. Besides, this good casuist is complaisant: he permits his devotees to make

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themselves amends for the pleasures which he prohibits, with others incomparably more refined and engaging.

Crito. I find there is not much difference between self-love's devotees, and the actors of the wise world. May it not be said, that among such people, conscience has fewer voices in the chapter, than it has among the actors of the foolish world?

Eraustus. You have hit the nail on the head, *Crito*; and it is no hard matter to guess the reason. Self-love, which governs them both, is in the wise world a grave and rational casuist, that persuades with weighty reasons: whereas in the foolish world, it is an extravagant, passionate and unreserved counsellor; who may make what noise he pleases to hinder conscience from being heard, the least of its motions is always considered as a testimony of truth; if it is not followed or obeyed, it is at least feared and respected; men have no reasons to offer against it. The counsellor in question is not so well provided this way. In the wise world the case is different. If conscience attempts to speak, as its language is very simple and concise, and its decisions are most commonly given as quick as lightning, it has soon finished what it has to say. Then it steps the casuist, with a croud of demonstrative reasons against what conscience has pronounced; while it leaves him in sole possession of the argument, and lets him talk as long as he pleases. Thence it is concluded,

concluded, that it owns itself conquered, and that it is a fine thing to have to do with able and skilful people.

Crito. Dear Erastus, you have given a description of what has passed within me ten thousand times..

Philo. I find Crito becomes more learned every day, in the philosophy we were lately talking of; we shall soon be able to call him a man escaped from the wife world. It is plain he is in no good humour with it, and falls on it at every turn.

Crito. You will inspire me with emulation, Philo; I would fain prove your words true. I am sensible, however, that there is a wide difference between knowing the wife world for what it is, and really making one's escape from it.

Erastus. You will always be more and more sensible of that, Crito. But do we not forget ourselves? I believe it is time to retire; and I fear I have already made a friend wait, with whom I am to dine.

Crito. Shall we not see you again, Erastus, before you go into the country?

Erastus. I believe not, Crito, for I must go to-morrow morning. But I depend on seeing you in the country, and expect you will keep your word.

L E T T E R I.

From CRITO to ERASTUS.

IT is not my fault, dear Erastus, that I have not been so good as my word. I designed to have seen you yesterday with Philo; but was detained in town by some unlucky accidents, which it would be tiresome to relate. I would have engaged him to go alone; but he chose rather to stay for me.

To console ourselves under this delay, we walked towards the evening in our usual place of rendezvous. I will not let you know how melancholy it appeared without you. I had better tell you we stood in great need of such a friend as Erastus, to set us right. We fell into a dispute, which was occasioned by the subject of our last conversation.

The question turned on the language of conscience, and the manner in which you told us it expresses itself, in flashes as quick as lightning. Philo would not allow this language to be always that of truth. He maintained that the decisions of conscience ought to be examined and corrected by reasoning. He grounded what he said on that universally received maxim, That every man is obliged to enlighten his conscience. To which he added, the difficulties usually started on this article; that Pagans, Mahometans, and superstitious Christians, believe

lieve they obey their conscience in the false worship they give the deity: that even the most merciless persecutors pretend their conscience justifies them in their cruelties: in short, that we see good men, and persons of sense at the same time, giving into all sorts of puerilities, and becoming fanatics, when they blindly give themselves up to all they imagine conscience requires at their hands.

It would be tedious to tell you what reply I made: thus much is certain, I did not acquit myself well of the task, and Philo went away delighted with his advantage over me. I threatened him that he should not come off so well another time; that I would send you an account of our dispute, and engage you to answer for me. He seemed to consent readily to the proposal: I am now as good as my word; he is in my room while I am writing; and I shall let him see my letter, that he may judge whether my charge against him is just or not. He may look as big as he pleases; but I am assured he already repents of giving his consent. I shall spare myself the trouble of concluding with an I am, &c. and you that of reading-it. I desire you will do the same, and believe it will be not less to your mind than to mine.

L E T T E R I.

From ERASTUS in the Country to CRITO.

DO you think it fair, dear Crito, to engage one's friends without their consent? At your rate of talking, one would imagine me a divine, and obliged to answer all objections that can be brought against a particular system.

By your leave, I do not take that to be my case; for, besides that I am no divine, I do not positively embrace any system, so as to set up for defending it. You will tell me, perhaps, that I adopt the system of conscience; I do indeed adopt it, if it may be allowed that title. But there is a great deal of difference between relishing a truth one's self, and engaging to maintain it against all possible attacks.

Philo may remember that when he asked me, in one of our first conversations, for a definition of conscience, I answered him, that I had not skill enough for that; that I left the task for the divines; and that for my part I could say nothing of it, but what I had learnt by experience.

The objections drawn up in your letter against the way of conscience are not new to me. I myself for a long time formed a terrible notion of the rocks on which that way might cast me; at present I cannot sufficiently admire the contradiction I observe in the language of the generality of mankind; especially

especially in the class of the wise world, where men profess to set a great value on conscience, to have a supreme contempt for a man who has none, or willfully acts against its dictates; and would consider him as a person void of honesty and sincerity. Who could depend on him in any thing? By this idea, of which every one makes profession, men pay homage to conscience, attribute to it what is most excellent and valuable among mankind, and own that without it, nothing would be valuable or excellent.

On the other hand, the worst of vices are ascribed to it, such as idolatry, superstition, fanaticism, and the spirit of persecution. Thus it is soon degraded from its former rank; on this foot it must be upright and false at the same time; the source of the greatest good, and the source of the greatest evil; in a word, sweet and bitter waters must flow from the same spring.

I heartily wish, my dear friend Crito, and those, whose cause he pleads, would teach me how to reconcile two things so directly opposite. In the mean time, I shall decline writing on a subject which seems to me too serious for the country, at least if it must be handled gravely, as Philo and Crito propose.

You see, my dear friend, you are mistaken in the choice of your man for setting you right. Beside that I am but a poor writer, the country invites me rather to think than write. You expect, perhaps,

haps, that I should communicate my reveries to you, and tell you how I pass my time here; but not a word of that, except you come and share the pleasure with me. Besides, to tell you the truth, I should think half an hour ill employed in giving you the particulars. A company of little musicians, perched on the top of the trees, have waited for me this quarter of an hour; they love to sing in the cool of the day, we hear but little of them when the sun shines hot. Judge now, dear Crito, if I can stay in the house, and spend one moment in writing.

L E T T E R II.

From CRITO to ERASTUS.

I Perceive, dear Erastus, that I must surmount all imaginable difficulties to come to you; without that, the quarrel between Philo and me, cannot be ended. You designed to mortify me by not sending a direct answer to Philo's objections, as I took upon me to promise you would. My disappointment has proved no small comfort to him. He expected to be soundly paid off: the bare shortness of your letter revived him, before he knew the contents of it. I observed, however, that he was gravelled at two or three passages.

He made a point of honour of adopting all that can be offered in favour of conscience, and knew

not

not how to reconcile it with what he had advanced to its disadvantage. In short, he was forced to own he had made such objections, with a view of speaking the language of several people, and giving you an opportunity of answering it, rather than with design of expressing his own ideas. I perceived that, if there was some truth in what he said, it was at the same time a sort of evasion. I let him know as much, which was not very agreeable to him. You see then, dear Erastus, that our difference will still subsist, until you reconcile us. In fine, we are resolved to see you to-morrow, and perhaps early enough in the morning to hear your little musicians. It is to be hoped that harmony will have some effect on our minds, and in some measure dispose us to sing the same tune.

L E T T E R II.

From ERASTUS to CRITO.

I Was not a little vexed, when I awaked this morning, and heard it rain violently. Did not you sympathize with me, dear Crito? I was willing to flatter myself for above an hour, that the rain would give over, and that I might yet enjoy the company of my friends. But it has begun again, and I must lose all hopes for to-day at least; for I depend on its allowing us some quarter to-morrow,
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and hope I shall see you here very early. In the mean while, I must be resigned to be a prisoner all day, which is no small mortification to me. I should make but a bad figure in the country, were I obliged to keep my room; and in that particular, I must confess I am a poor philosopher.

I have been reading over your two letters. The diversions of the place, and the objects with which it presents me, had made me forget the subject of the first. That is not the case at present. The turns I have taken in my chamber, are so far from defacing Philo's objections about conscience out of my mind, that they present them fresher to my memory; and I have been so importuned by them, that I have taken up my pen, to write what occurs to me, and clear my hands of the subject, if I can.

The difficulties in question, at first appeared to me very considerable, and much more so on the receipt of your letter. I know not but the cloudiness of the weather has helped to diffuse some obscurity on my ideas; but I see things very confusedly, and what the other day seemed very easily demolished, appeared to me like a mountain to-day.

I really thought that such as had committed the greatest errors in point of religion, made use of the pretext of conscience, and value themselves on obeying its motions. What is conscience then? said I, within myself. Doth it stand in need of being enlightened

lightened and corrected, as Philo supposes, according to the universally received maxim?

By what rule must it be corrected? To do this, we must find a rule infallibly right, and incapable of varying; if we are not provided with such a rule, we must still have recourse to another more right and invariable for correcting this; and so on *ad infinitum*, till we meet with the infallible rule, or the rule of rules, by which all is to be corrected.

Where then shall we find this invariable rule? Shall it be reasoning, as so many maintain? But is there any necessity of proving that nothing in the world is so variable as reasoning? Why must one way of reasoning be rectified by another, that by a third, and so on *ad infinitum*, without our ever coming to one, that will not admit of correction? Why, among a thousand persons who understand reasoning, do we not find four who entirely agree?

Every one charges his antagonist's reasoning with falsity: if reasoning ought to serve for the rule, there must be, in this multitude of opposite reasonings, an infinity of false rules, which do not deserve that appellation, because a rule is a rule only as it is one and right.

Where then is this invariable rule? said I to myself. Is it conscience? But is not that accused of being subject to still more variations than reasoning? Do not the different sects or religions, in which every man thinks he has conscience on his side, give us

room

room to judge that it doth not every where speak the same language?

Here now are variations on all sides. Is there no certainty for man, and must he necessarily fall into falsehood, even while he is obeying his conscience? At that rate, no man would be culpable, or have any occasion to reproach himself with a crime. Disobedience to conscience would be a thing indifferent, as it would not be a safer guide than reasoning. If conscience is not better qualified for commanding respect than reasoning, if the former has no superiority over the latter, of what use will it be? Shall it be its business to go hand in hand with reasoning, and command with equal authority? Here is a conflict of jurisdiction; if the orders of one are contrary to those of the other, and their authority equal, which must be obeyed, and who shall judge?

But, by way of expedient, conscience shall have the pre-eminence, and speak first. Reasoning will then step in to examine and rectify her decisions; that is, conscience will have the pre-eminence in name, and reasoning in reality. Conscience will be in the condition of a prince during his minority, who bears the title of sovereignty, while in what regards the government of the state, he is considered as a cipher, and all the subjects know the regent governs, and not the prince. What will be the consequence of this? Reasoning will not only be above conscience, but will rule alone, because no order given by conscience

conscience can pass, without being examined and corrected by reason.

Thus conscience becomes useless in the world, since men have found out the art assigning it a governour. It must have relapsed into a state of infancy, and given proofs of weakness, before men can go this length. But have they a full right to consider it always, as weak both in themselves and others? In this last respect, there are a hundred cases in which they would be very much displeased it should pass for such. Is any affair of interest in question, where they find themselves injured, the governour, or reasoning, may take what pains he pleases to make the contrary appear; he will still be liable to exception: men will appeal to the definitive judgment of conscience, without allowing the governour any redress. They are willing conscience should judge alone in him who injures another; and are convinced that if he listens to it, he will be condemned without being able to gain a second hearing.

Why do we guess so exactly what will be the decisions of conscience in another? Why do we appeal to that of an enemy, how unjust soever he may be, with an absolute assurance that it will condemn him if he listens to it? Were the conscience of a person who acts thus in his own power, were he master of it, as he is of reasoning, would it give judgment

judgment against him? Would he not oblige it to speak as he pleased?

In this respect, conscience ceases to be weak in the judgment of all mankind. They not only set it above reasoning, but are desirous that all men should consult it alone in regard to their way of acting with them, particularly where interest is concerned. Here they grow diffident of the most specious reasonings; and charge them with being false and deceitful. They declare that they appeal to every man's own conscience; and are ready to submit to its judgment.

This is a proof that men respect conscience in general, though they set no value on it in particular. They are sensible what advantage they can make of that of others; but sit down contented with not knowing to what purpose they have one of their own. On the other hand, every one will do his best to make an advantage of his neighbour's conscience in what suits his own conveniency. This is the way to hinder it from being entirely useless; this is a stroke of art.

But do we not find this same art miscarry in regard to ourselves? Are there not certain times and circumstances, in which conscience exerts its authority over reasoning, and obliges it to be silent? Danger of shipwreck, for example, or the view of approaching death, are sufficient to convince us that the testimony of conscience cannot be reformed by reason, how refined soever it may be supposed; and that

that it dares not attempt to disprove conscience in what it pronounces, when awakened by the approach of eternity.

It must be owned that conscience plays very different parts among men. Sometimes it stands in need of reformation; at others, it acts the reformer. It always speaks truth in others, when it condemns them for an injury done us; but may mistake in us: when it pronounces some accusation against us, it must be rectified by reasoning. Here now are very contrary parts.

But is it, properly speaking, conscience that plays them, and not rather men who play them in what regards conscience? Is not light invariably the same, though it produces contrary effects, as the eye is well or ill disposed?

If the eye happens to be afflicted with a cataract, do men say light must be cleared, that the eye may see? Is it not immediately thought, the eye must be rectified, as containing all the obstacles to the refraction of light?

These, dear Crito, are part of the loose reveries, which the reading of your letters, and a walk in my chamber, have produced. If they afford you any entertainment, you must thank the rain, and my mortification at being confined while in the country; I should not otherwise have been able to come to a resolution of committing them to writing. I could say a great deal more on the subject; but shall take
care

care not to send you my thoughts. You must come yourself, if you desire to have my reveries more at large. An excellent inducement for friends to take a walk!

Our dear friend Philo will see in the mean time what weight ought to be allowed that maxim, which he says is universally received, That conscience stands in need of being enlightened, and that its decisions ought to be examined and corrected by reasoning.

Good-night, my dear friend. As the weather begins to clear up, I hope I shall be a good astronomer, and that it will be fair to-morrow. I wish I may have as good skill in astrology, when I foretel that I shall see you here. It will be your fault if I do not pass for such, and receive the addition of that title to the character of magician, which you have already bestowed on me.

L E T T E R III.

From CRITO to ERASTUS.

YOU shall not set up for an astrologer, dear Erastus, since it has not been in our power to see you to-day, though our inclination was good. As for the character of magician, Philo says there is no disputing it with you, since your letter of yesterday. He maintains, there must be some magic in your way of thinking; otherwise you could never have

have overthrown the universally received maxim as you do. With this persuasion he endeavours to console himself under his being worsted, as I had told him he must expect. However, he still pretends to look big on your not having gone through with the difficulties he had proposed to you. But I foresee he will be entirely routed. If nothing but a rainy day was necessary for giving me that pleasure, (without offence) I could wish for it with all my heart. I am too much obliged to the weather yesterday, not to prefer my own satisfaction in that point to yours. You see, Erastus, that disinterestedness gains ground in me. If that is not my case, you will, at least, be somewhat pleased with me for appearing such as I am, according to your favourite maxim.

L E T T E R III.

From ERASTUS to CRITO.

I Perceive, dear Crito, you are endeavouring to put me in a passion in good earnest. You are loading me with affronts, by being worse than your word, and wishing me a hearty rain, and that in such a manner, that it may fall opportunely. You must be a good astrologer yourself, since your wishes prove so many predictions; and I am thus reduced to the necessity of writing against my will, in order to clear my hands of what I had farther to say concerning my

my reveries. Judge now if less provocation than this would not be sufficient to wear out my patience. But I will not give a loose to passion at present, I reserve myself for our next meeting; you would come off too easily in a letter.

In order to proceed to the sequel of my reveries, it might be necessary to repeat the substance of what I said in my last. The following, if I mistake not, is the conclusion to be drawn from it:

That since all men acknowledge conscience invariable, in the cases which we have specified; since they respect it in others as a divine testimony, when it no ways clashes with their passions; and mistrust it either in themselves, or others only, when it attacks them in those passions, or their prejudices, it must be really invariable in itself; and the variations ascribed to it, proceed not from it, but from some foreign cause, with which it has no connection. This is explained by the comparison of light, which is in itself invariable, though different in its effects on the subjects exposed to it.

If we must give a good sense to the universally received maxim, instead of saying, *Conscience ought to be enlightened*, it should be said, *That we ought to allow conscience to enlighten us, by endeavouring the removal of all obstacles in its way.*

In this sense, conscience would no longer be charged with the contrarieties which appear in the different sects that fill the world; since those very contrarieties

Contrarieties are the result of the obstacles which each man forms within himself, to the simple lights of conscience, and the impressions of truth.

Here a new objection may be started: if conscience is in all men a divine testimony, it is endowed with the infallibility attributed to the church, &c. If it is infallible, those who listen to it, and obey it, must become so too. We do not see this to be the case. Persons the most docil in following what their conscience requires of them, are not secure from error; we even find among them such contrarieties and difference of sentiments, as seem to be so many proofs, that their guide is neither infallible, nor invariably the same.

This difficulty is the same, in the main, with that which relates to the multitude of sects, and the contrarieties subsisting among them. Conscience is not concerned here; on the contrary, confusion has been successfully introduced into the world, because conscience has not been sufficiently received and obeyed.

As to persons who are docil in following what they believe conscience requires of them, they are not indeed secure from error or mistakes in point of opinion, or speculative ideas; because conscience doth not begin to work in man on ideas or opinions. As sound ideas cannot make him essentially good, erroneous ideas cannot render him essentially bad. What then is the first and chief office of conscience?

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To labour to make man upright in relation to truth and himself: from which uprightness toward his neighbour necessarily results.

In order to bring him to this uprightness, conscience begins with shewing him the false within him, not in ideas, but in the will. The influence of the will over man, is of a very different nature from that of ideas. The will alone is sufficient for leading him to every thing most divine, when it is upright; as well as to whatever is most diabolical, when it is void of uprightness. When conscience labours to rectify the will, rather than ideas, it doth not thereby leave man a prey to error and seduction; on the contrary, it, by this means, conducts him into the path of truth.

In proportion as the will becomes upright, it enters into an equilibrium, which divests the mind of the prejudices that obscured it, and were so many obstacles to the impressions of truth. This equilibrium is not acquired in a few days; it is formed imperceptibly, in proportion to the progress of the will in uprightness; and the will becomes upright only in as much as it performs all that conscience may require of it.

Obedience to conscience, therefore, is the true key of knowledge, it is the introduction to all truth. If this key is in every man's hand, why doth it let so few into the path of truth? It is because they either know not how to use it, or will not use it. They

would

would be displeased at being shewn too much that way; and thus they want the first degree of uprightness: for if they would give entrance to truth, they ought not to endeavour to avoid it.

I believe, dear Crito, I have said enough to clear conscience of the false accusations urged against it; but know not how you will justify your ill usage of me. I will ask you to come no more; I am too angry with you. Besides, I fear, that on your arrival here, all my fury would vanish, and I should appear perfectly good-humoured.

DIALOGUE VIII.

CRITO and PHILO meeting ERASTUS in the Country.

Crito. SHALL we repose ourselves in this charming walk, Philo? Erastus may come hither accidentally; his surprize would divert me.

Philo. We have been worse than our word so often, that it is extremely probable he has given over all hopes of seeing us.

Crito. I should have been very sorry, if we had been able to come sooner, Philo. He would not have prevailed with himself to write down what he calls his reveries, which would have proved a great loss to us. I know not whether you was as sensible as I, of the force of his two last letters.

Philo. I was so sensible of it, Crito, that methinks till that time I never had any idea of the reality of religion, conscience, and uprightness. What Erastus said on those points in our walks, had made but very little impression on me: his letters were necessary for opening my eyes, and letting me see how little uprightness I had. The last particularly has affected me very strongly, and convinced me, that I was deficient in the essential point, and was as yet a stranger to the first degree of uprightness, because I shut my eyes against the truth.

Crito. You do not imagine, Philo, that I am going to congratulate you on the progress you are likely to make in the school of Erastus's master.

Philo. I very well deserve to be bantered in my turn, dear Crito, after having rallied you so often on that topic. I put on an air of pleasantry; but at the bottom was really very jealous. I was not a little vexed, when I saw you hit the mark on several occasions, while I shot wide.

Crito. I hear somebody stir in that arbour; perhaps it is Erastus, who is gone to repose himself there, that he may meditate at his ease.

Philo. Let us walk that way, without making a noise, that he may not see us. I hear somebody sing? What if it should be he? Do you hear what he is singing, Crito?

Crito. Hush, let me listen Would you know the words? they are these:

As the bright ruler of the day
The smallest atoms makes appear;
So truth, with one-enlight'ning ray,
Discovers what we truly are.

Philo. That's for me; one would imagine he knows we are here.

Crito. He knows nothing of the matter, *Philo*, as you shall see by his surprize. Let us steal into the harbour.

Crito. Give us that song once more, *Erastus*; we should be glad to learn it.

Erastus. Is this your way of surprizing folks, gentlemen? You have not allowed me time enough to put on my angry face; it is now too late to attempt it; and I must appear in a good-humour to you, in spite of my teeth.

Philo. But seriously, *Erastus*, did you not know we were near you? I thought you had chosen this song for me.

Erastus. I know so little of the matter, *Philo*, that I had lost all hopes of seeing you in the country. I was preparing to go and quarrel with you in town, where I propose being to-morrow. But, to my song, pray in what particular do you find it suits you?

Philo. It suits me as much, *Erastus*, as the contents of your two letters, or, if you please, the revelations you have communicated to us.

Crito. Did you know, Eraſtus, what an impreſſion your reveries have made in Philo's mind, you would not have been ſo angry with me for engaging you to put them in writing.

Eraſtus. Are you in jeſt or in earneſt, when you talk to me at this rate?

Crito. I am very ſerious, Eraſtus; Philo can tell you how it is, better than I. All I can gueſs, from what he has ſaid to me on that ſubject, is, that your two laſt letters have made him open his eyes to what he before feared ſeeing.

Eraſtus. I did not expect that reveries could have done ſo much.

Philo. They have done enough for explaining what you had ſaid in our walks concerning conſcience, and what I neither would nor could underſtand. I was juſt telling Crito, that I was not a little vexed to ſee him hit the mark, while I ſtood wide, and perceived what I did not: not that I had a mind to enter into a diſpoſition like his; but I was ſorry he was in ſuch an one, not caring he ſhould have that advantage over me. Have you not obſerved, Eraſtus, that my firſt congratulations on the progreſs he made, were a ſort of compoſition of ſweet and ſour? I made uſe of them ſucceſsfully for diverſion. When truth became troubleſome to me, I immediately found ſome plaſtron for guarding me againſt it; eſpecially when the queſtion turned on being upright and ſincere with one's ſelf, I could not

bear

bear that article. When Crito accused himself of want of honesty, he gave me all the mortification imaginable. I felt, in spite of myself, that the shoe pinched me there. To get rid of this trouble, I defended him charitably; and you ought to think me very civil in that particular.

Erastus. Dear Philo, I guessed well enough what was the principle of that civil humour. One who has been acquainted with the wise world, is very capable of discovering its practices in another.

Philo. Now you mention the wise world, do you know I was cruelly mortified every time it was brought on the stage; and the more so, as I endeavoured to put a good face on the matter, that you might not perceive how I was affected. I found my character too well drawn in it, not to know myself there: but I would not see myself, much less own myself of that class. Crito gave me much uneasiness, when he acknowledged he belonged to it with so much ingenuousness; that frankness was as insupportable to me, as it would have been agreeable, had it not reproached me.

Crito. You know how to compose yourself, Philo; and no one who saw you would have supposed you suffered so much.

Erastus. I could have judged very exactly of the matter; and a certain air of perplexity spoke more to me, than an air of vexation and anger.

Philo. I envied you both that freedom and ease which I observed in you; I dissembled the best I could, that I might seem on the level with you; but it was all to no purpose. I was always under some restraint; the most I could do, was to run away; and when I perceived how the case stood with me, I found fresh matter for jealousy, which I took great care to conceal. I found employment enough, when I undertook not to appear what I was, and to appear what I was not. Are you to be surprized, that I could not seem free and easy, while I had so serious an affair on my hands?

Erastus. The wise world, which pretends to ape all that is beautiful and lovely, makes a man counterfeit a sort of ease and freedom, and even ingenuoufness, though they are the contrary of its character. But there is no less difference between that counterfeit ease, and the true one, than between brass counters and Louis-d'ors.

Philo. I conceive, that if men could but once resolve to see themselves, and let others see them such as they really are, freedom, ease, and ingenuoufness, would be the natural result of such a disposition. It would be a fine thing to see the heart thus laid open; but then, on the other hand, would it not be a most frightful sight?

Crito. I leave you to judge, Philo, what a scene it would be to view men devoted to interest, envy, and ambition, entirely puffed up with themselves; not

not to mention grosser vices, which rather belong to the foolish world.

Philo. Is it not better men should continue masked as they are, than play such odious and deformed parts in the world?

Eraustus. The mask which men wear, is what occasions the greatest deformity. By the help of that, they not only conceal what they really are from others, but even hide themselves from themselves. The use of it renders their distemper incurable, so long as they remain strangers to themselves. Could men resolve to shew themselves such as they are, how deformed soever they might be, the evil being discovered, would soon be removed. They would have too much confusion both before themselves and others, to neglect the means of a cure. Conscience, not being stifled in them by hypocrisy and disguise, would be a clue to lead them out of this labyrinth.

Crito. I imagine, Eraustus, that sincerity in shewing one's self such as one is, would be one step toward uprightness, which would allow truth to make itself heard, and thus free man from the evil.

Eraustus. Right, Crito. The least degree of uprightness would be sufficient for making men conquer the most corrupt inclinations, as they would not endeavour to conceal them from themselves.

Philo. What you observed in your last letter, Eraustus, concerning that first degree of uprightness, proved a thunder-clap to me. I was convinced I

had not that first degree; since I could not bear the impressions of truth, when it aimed at curing me of my esteem for myself. I felt what conscience was, and that in a manner till then unknown to me. What you said of it in your letters, made me feel something of it; but I have found that the least experience teaches us more on that head, than all the definition that can be given of it.

Crito. Do you remember, *Philo*, that, in one of our former conversations, you asked *Eraustus* for a definition of conscience?

Philo. I chose rather to hear his definition of it, than to be referred to my own. *Eraustus* mortified me, when he refused my request.

Eraustus. Several people find this convenience in definitions of conscience, that they make use of them for rendering themselves still deaser to what might be offered. Conscience is of so nice a nature, and so much superior to reasoning, that it escapes from all definitions. Those who delight in trifling, will always find room enough to do it on this head. They fight with their own shadow; while conscience would secretly reproach them with want of uprightness, if they would but listen to it one moment. But they are glad to seek it where it is not, that they may, with more security, avoid being in a condition of hearing it.

Crito. Do you not see somebody, *Eraustus*, who hastens towards us?

Eraustus.

Erastus. He comes to call us to dinner; let us not make the company wait. We will take another walk in the afternoon. I will carry you into a little grove, where we shall have more shade than here.

D I A L O G U E IX.

CRITO, PHILO, and ERASTUS.

Crito. **H**AVE you not taken a little nap since dinner, Philo?

Philo. If I have not slept, I have had several reveries. I know not whether this humour be peculiar to N——'s country-house, or whether I have caught it of Erastus; but I find it very agreeable. The shade of these chefnut-trees seems to contribute to it; and I should have continued in it at least two hours, had not you come and fetched me out of it.

Crito. We have teased Erastus so much, to make him communicate his reveries to us, that he will have a good right to make the like demand on you.

Philo. My reveries are of but little concern to Erastus; they are only the impressions his have made on me.

Erastus. Do you imagine, Philo, that reveries which are either the sequel or effect of mine, are of but little concern to me? I cannot be indifferent to the good or evil that results to you from them:

if the latter, I shall be very sorry ; if the former, I shall be very glad, not only on a principle of friendship, but also on that of self-love, which is delighted with having contributed to the advantage of one's friends.

Philo. I believe, dear Erastus, that self-love has not now much influence over you.

Erastus. If you entertain that notion, Philo, I ought to undeceive you. I pretend to be no more than one escaped from the wise world ; and how widely distant is such a state from that of a man on whom self-love has no influence ? I confess I have only a glimpse of it at a great distance. I would fain find a more significative expression, than that of a man who has escaped from the wise world ; it is too extensive in a strict sense. If it is true in any sense, it is only because I have left off acting a part in it, because I see it such as it really is, and do all in my power to keep at a distance from it. But if the same expression might be made to mean that I am still belonging both to the wise and foolish world, by habits hard to be rooted out, by inclinations opposite to what is good, and passions still very strong, it would then describe me perfectly well. You are surprized, Philo, at the picture I draw of myself ; it is not less to the life than what I presented you with the other day, in quality of an actor in the wise world. All the difference between the two pieces is, that in one the

man

man is disguised, studies how to cheat the whole world, deceive himself, appear what he is not, and not appear what he really is; in the other, he endeavours to impose on no man, but is willing to see the deformed part of himself, and let others see him in the same light.

Philo. I was just going to tell you, Erastus, that modesty had a great share in the account you give of your present disposition. But I stop short, apprehending you would reprimand me, as you once did on the same occasion. I am sensible likewise, that this way of speaking would have been an effect of self-love in me; while I considered you as much more advanced than myself, I should not have been willing to perceive I had still a long journey to make.

Erastus. What advantage I may have over you, dear Philo, is very inconsiderable. The uprightness of the will, into which you seem to enter in good earnest, will soon put us on the level. Though the road be long, that ought to give us no trouble; if we begin with the steps before us, we shall proceed in our journey; and it is not necessary we should yet see the end of it.

Another essential difference between the pictures in question, is, that in one the man has made choice of a fixt point, where he is willing to stop; he is very well satisfied with himself, and the part he is acting: in the other, he stops no where, he still goes on

on where conscience directs him, and is never satisfied with himself well enough to stay where he is.

Philo. You draw me very well, Erastus, in the first of those pieces. I have hitherto been very well satisfied with myself, and the part I acted in the world. I saw no addition that could be made to my wisdom; and should have been very angry, had any one attempted to remove me from the fixt point, where I was resolved to stop. Your stay here, and the discourse we have had in our walks, have frequently given me a secret uneasiness in that particular. If I have shut my eyes against the truth, it is because I feared it would lead me farther than I was inclined to go. I every where find a want of uprightness; that only stoppt me. However, I made profession of valuing uprightness beyond all that could be said.

Crito. Uprightness is a principle so simple and incontestable, that all the world pretends to espouse its cause. Uprightness in our dealings with our neighbour is constantly esteemed. Self-love is concerned in it; we should be very well pleased that every one would deal uprightly with us; and for the same reason, we value ourselves on dealing so with others: but are absolutely ignorant from what fund this uprightness should proceed, in order to be real. Uprightness, in regard to truth, and to ourselves,

is entirely unknown ; and because we want that, we are contented with knowing no more of it.

Erastus. It is impossible for a man to be truly upright toward his neighbour, unless he is first so toward truth and himself. There is no command for loving our neighbour better than ourselves. As to truth, as it alone can enable us to distinguish what is right from what is not ; how shall we listen to it when it speaks for our neighbour, if we have not given it the hearing when it spoke for ourselves ; that is, when it reproved us for the wrong done to ourselves ?

Philo. I know some men who will admit of all you have said concerning uprightness toward truth, on condition you did not by the word truth understand the language of conscience. That term conscience has something in it that gives them pain.

Erastus. I conceive the reason of that, Philo ; it is because the word conscience sends them back too far into themselves ; whereas that of truth, being less determinate, leaves them in a persuasion, that the truths in question are such as may be found without themselves, and learnt by reasoning. Such persons hold conscience to be weak, as I said in one of my letters. I would fain ask them, whether they have a conscience or not ? They, in their turn, might ask me, for what sort of people I take them, when I make that a matter of doubt. If you have one, I should say, Is it upright or false ? True, or a liar ?

a liar? They would repeatedly reply, that it is true and upright. If so, I should ask them again, why they would not own the language of conscience, and that of truth, to be one and the same thing?

Philo. Let them get out of that scrape if they can.

Crito. In order to give them the finishing stroke, one need only shew them what Erastus says in one of his letters, or reveries, concerning the invariable rule by which every thing is to be corrected and regulated, and which itself admits of no correction.

Philo. One of the passages, which I think most proper for opening the eyes of reasonable men, is the question which Erastus asks concerning the use or design of conscience; whether it ought to be placed above or below reasoning, or walk hand in hand with it, as its equal. The comparison of a prince in his minority, and a regent, which follows that question, serves to set truth in a strong light in that respect.

Erastus. Do you think, Philo, that good reasoners could not get out of all those difficulties? They would find evasions enough; I am in no manner of pain for them. I observed to you this morning, that such as delight in trifling, are under but little apprehension from the justest definitions, which can be given of conscience. By accustoming themselves to dispute about the definition, they put themselves still less in a condition of hearing the
decisions

decisions of their own conscience. Thus they gain their end; which is all they desire.

Crito. From your saying this morning that conscience is above the reach of all definitions, I imagine it bears some resemblance to light. All the definitions which can be given of light, can never help us to any idea of it. Define it to a blind man, he will be never the wiser. Define it to a peasant, who has good eyes, you'll make no addition to the idea or opinion he has of it.

Philo. This comes to what Erasmus says in one of his letters. The obstacles to light are in man himself; it is on man we must go to work, if we would remove the obstacles which hinder truth from reaching him.

Crito. These obstacles must certainly be very considerable in all men, since so few give entrance to truth. Almost all men are slaves to error, superstition, and the most extravagant opinions. The small number capable of knowing truth (I mean, the Christians) are attached to their passions, blinded to their prejudices, and a presumption of their being perfectly clear-sighted. It is impossible to say on which side the obstacles are most hard to be removed, or how it may be effected. It is to no purpose for me to say to myself, that uprightness of will, and obedience to conscience, are sufficient for that end; this seems false from experience, in regard to great numbers of Pagans, who have appeared

peared men of integrity; and yet conscience has not disengaged them from error.

Philo. We may make the same observation in regard to several Christians, who seem to have a very tender conscience, and yet it does not cure them of superstition.

Erastus. What you say, Crito, includes two questions; first, What are the obstacles most difficult to be removed? Secondly, Whether it be possible that uprightness of will, and obedience to conscience, should be sufficient to effect it.

Let us, if you please, distinguish two sorts of obstacles; one voluntary, the other involuntary. I now speak of all men in general, both Christians and Pagans.

I say then that uprightness of will and obedience to conscience, are perfectly sufficient for removing voluntary obstacles; and that such as are involuntary may be more or less surmounted by the same means, as certain circumstances are less or more favourable.

Philo. Were I not a little stupid, I should understand you at half a word, without any further explication. But I must do myself justice in this point, and beg you would illustrate what you say by some examples.

Erastus. Let us first consider what involuntary obstacles are. They are what we neither could prevent nor hinder; such as men have raised in

us,

us, without our consent, and before it was in our power to guard against them. Of this sort are false notions in points of religion, the extravagant and superstitious opinions, which are forged in the heads of young people, before they have time to give their consent to them.

Of this sort likewise, are the bad examples of vicious persons, joined to their pernicious maxims, which insinuate themselves into young hearts, before they can suspect the tendency of them. This last kind of obstacles, which are at first involuntary, may afterwards become voluntary.

Philo. I now very well understand in what involuntary obstacles consist. You see, *Erastus*, I have some penetration; but I am afraid you will soon have another notion of me in that respect, if I ask you in what voluntary obstacles consist.

Crito. I imagine myself sufficiently able to answer that question, *Philo*. They are such as depend on the will.

Philo. None but a philosopher, like *Crito*, could have demonstrated that nothing more resembles what is white than whiteness.

Erastus. It must be owned, that voluntary obstacles are more easily understood than defined, unless we would be content with *Crito's* definition. As ridiculous as it is, we shall not fail to make some advantage of it; and that by considering what are the obstacles which depend on the will.

Crito.

Crito. You see, Philo, that Erastus sets some value on what you despise so much.

Erastus. One of the first things that depends on the will, is to listen to remorse of conscience, or to stifle it. If the will takes the first way, it thereby begins to be upright, which is an introduction to all good. If the last, it enters into the false, which is the beginning of all evil.

When the will has once entered into the first degree of uprightness, it depends on that faculty to advance in the same path, and to be called from the first to the second, from the second to the third, and so on, as long as it does not go out of the way. This is not hard to conceive. Can it be doubted that it is in the power of my will to avoid all voluntary evil, and in that point perform what my conscience requires of me. Now conscience requires nothing impossible; it never reproaches us with what we are not able to avoid. Supposing then that I honestly give myself up to its direction, either to renounce all it may forbid me, or to perform all it may require of me; are not voluntary obstacles thus removed? And is it not incontestable, as I have advanced, that uprightness of will, and obedience to conscience, are abundantly sufficient for removing all voluntary obstacles?

Philo. What you say, Erastus, is evident in regard to practice. If my conscience never re-

quires

quires what is impossible, it is certainly in my power to obey it. But in regard to speculative truths, (I mean, the most important) does conscience lead us as directly to them? And is it sufficient for removing the obstacles which oppose them?

Erastus. In order to answer this last question, we must use several *distinguo's*. We must first know what you call important truths; and whether the obstacles, which oppose their reception, are voluntary or involuntary.

Philo. By important truths, I understand those revealed to us in the gospel, concerning the coming of Jesus Christ, his life, death, resurrection, with others of the same nature. It is evident that an infinity of men have not been conducted to these truths by conscience; of this sort are the great multitude of Pagans, Jews, and Mahometans; not to mention the numbers of those who disfigure the gospel by erroneous tenets, which they pretend to have found in it. As to the obstacles which oppose the establishment of truth, among those different people, I have not sufficiently inquired in what class they are to be ranged, so as to speak decisively on that point.

Erastus. Do you remember, Philo, that about half an hour ago, you told me you very well understood the nature of involuntary obstacles, from the detail I gave you of them?

Philo.

Philo. I do remember it, *Eraſtus*.

Eraſtus. Do you not find then that the different people, of whom you ſpoke juſt now, are ſurrounded by involuntary obſtacles, ſuch as I deſcribed: that they are beſet with them before they can ſuſpect them, and conſequently guard againſt them? Let us take a Jew, for example, before he can well ſpeak, he is inſpired on one hand with an extreme horror of Chriſtians; on the other, with a blind obedience for all his parents teach him concerning religion. The caſe is the ſame with the Turks; and what is ſtill more ſurprizing, Chriſtians themſelves are not in a better ſituation on account of the different parties or religions, which they profeſs. Such of them, particularly, as pretend to have infallibility among them, are ſurrounded by obſtacles, not only involuntary, but almoſt inſuperable in regard to the knowledge of certain truths.

Philo. I am very ſenſible, *Eraſtus*, that all thoſe different ranks of men cannot be blamable for the obſtacles among which they are born, and which are thrown in their way without their conſent.

Eraſtus. Pray tell me, *Philo*; does conſcience reproach men with things for which they are not to be blamed, and which did not depend on them?

Philo. A pretty queſtion! that would be unjuſt.

Eraſtus. This is the reaſon, why conſcience in a Jew or Mahometan, doth not reproach him for being a Jew or Mahometan, nor for the exerciſes

of

of religion, which he practises as such. Let us say the same of a sincere Christian, who should from his infancy imbibe the prejudices of the infallible sect. Conscience makes him no reproach on that score, nor for the superstitious practices which may result from it. With much more reason may the application be made to a Pagan; in a word, to all the people whom we call idolaters, and who have been least in the way of knowing the truth.

Crito. This solves the objection I started concerning the insufficiency of uprightness of will, among several very worthy Pagans, for disengaging them from errors.

Philo. Here you must give me an explanation of what you advanced e'en now, in regard to which I told you I was a little dull of apprehension. We were talking of voluntary and involuntary obstacles. Having asserted that uprightness of will, and obedience to conscience, were sufficient for surmounting voluntary obstacles, you added that, by the same means, a man might more or less surmount involuntary ones, as some certain circumstances were more or less favourable. I very well understand the first article; but beg you would explain the second.

Eraustus. Let us suppose a Jew, for example, whose will is upright, and who pays a faithful obedience to his conscience in practical things; this docility will insensibly carry him on to a better acquaintance

quaintance with himself. If he knows himself, he will begin to be diffident of himself, and perceive he is capable of prejudices and obstinacy, in regard to religion. As soon as he comes to see himself in this point of view, he will be on his guard against all that may offer itself from that quarter against Christianity. He will then resolve to enter into an impartial disposition in regard to truth, and receive it from what quarter soever it come; and even doubt whether it may not be found in Christianity. Thence he will go so far as to take a resolution of embracing that religion, supposing truth is found in it, whatever it may cost him. Thus far we see that in this Jew, uprightness of will, and obedience to conscience, have removed voluntary obstacles, and made way for truth. He is thereby placed in that equilibrium, which disposes the soul to receive all the impressions of it. Now tell me, Philo, do you think a man very far from the truth, when he has proceeded thus far, though he is unacquainted with the particular circumstances revealed to us in the gospel, relating to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ? And supposing this Jew dies in so upright a disposition, before it is in his power to get such a thorough information of the truth, as is sufficient for embracing Christianity; do you think, I say, that his fate would on that account only be more miserable at his death?

Philo.

Philo. I am far from being of that opinion. He cannot be culpable of what did not depend on him. But, supposing the same Jew should live several years after he had entered into this disposition, would he not be infallibly led by his uprightness to embrace Christianity?

Erastus. Not infallibly; that would depend on the circumstances, more or less favourable, in which he might be. This is what I was just now saying, and what you found some difficulty to conceive. I will therefore explain it to you. To this end, instead of one Jew, we must suppose two, in an equal disposition of uprightness in regard to truth.

Philo. I heartily wish, dear Erastus, I could suppose the time would permit us to hear the sequel of your discourse, without danger of being shut out of town; but I think it is high time to retire, and that we have not a moment to lose.

Crito. You do well in reminding us, Philo; for believe, I should have run that hazard, rather than interrupt either of you.

Philo. I leave you to judge, Crito, what I have lost by it. I imagine myself like a school-boy, who leaves half his breakfast at home, for want of time to finish it. I hope Erastus will feel some remorse, that will oblige him to send me the remainder of mine.

Erastus. I rather chuse to bring it you, dear Philo; for I must be in town to-morrow.

DIALOGUE X.

In T O W N.

PHILO, CRITO, and ERASTUS.

Crito to **T**HIS is being a man of your word.
Erastus. Had Erastus been revengeful, he might have been even with us, by putting us off from day to day.

Erastus. I should have been the first sufferer, Philo: how much soever I like the country, I had no inclination to spend the few days there, which I have for seeing my friends.

Crito. Can not those few days be prolonged in their favour?

Erastus. It shall not be my fault, Crito, if they are not. But I beg we may not talk on that subject, I have nothing of the stoick in me; I may allow the thought to affect me in a manner that will spoil our walk.

Philo. To avoid that, Erastus, I must ask you what you have done with our Jew, or rather with the two Jews, whom you was bringing on the stage.

Erastus. If you please, Philo, they shall join us in our walk; I am going to pull them out of my pocket, where I put them last night.

[*Erastus*]

[*Eraſtus* takes a paper out of his pocket, which he delivers to *Philo*, who reads it to himſelf.]

Crito. How hardly you deal with theſe poor Jews, *Eraſtus*, by confining them in ſo cloſe a priſon !

Eraſtus. After you left me, I obſerved they followed me wherever I went ; and became ſo troubleſome, that I was obliged to have recourſe to this expedient for my own eaſe.

Crito. It were to be wiſhed a man could get rid of all troubleſome perſons with as little difficulty. But few of them are in the humour of being pocketed thus.

Philo. I could very eaſily be in the humour of charging you with being troubleſome, *Crito*. You hinder me from underſtanding one word of what I am reading.

Crito. It is partly to puniſh you, *Philo*, for keeping all to yourſelf ; had you begun to read aloud, nobody would have interrupted you.

Philo. I cannot read aloud as I walk, *Crito* ; let us fit down, and I will do the office of a friendly reader.

Crito. That expedient will reconcile our difference. I offer myſelf as your aſſiſtant, as ſoon as you are tired.

Philo. There will not be employment enough for two ; I am going to begin.

“ How to find out more easily, how the upright-
“ ness of the will, and obedience to conscience, may
“ lead more or less to the clear and distinct know-
“ ledge of certain truths, I have said, we must
“ suppose two Jews, instead of one, and both
“ in the same degree of uprightness and fidelity
“ in obeying their consciences: here then you
“ see them, so far as the will is concerned, in
“ a perfect equilibrium, in regard to truth. If
“ they have any obstacles still remaining, which op-
“ pose its impressions, the will has no share in them;
“ those obstacles come from a more remote quarter,
“ as we have already observed; they were formed
“ in them before it was in their power to mistrust
“ them.

“ Let us now see how different circumstances
“ may concur towards putting two persons so equal,
“ as to the main of their dispositions, in a different
“ point of view, in regard to opinions.

“ First then, we are to place our two Jews in dif-
“ ferent countries, though both in a condition of
“ knowing the Christians, and hearing them talk of
“ religion. To distinguish them the better, I shall
“ call one *Joseph*, the other *Benjamin*; they shall
“ both be supposed willing to doubt, whether they
“ are in possession of truth or not; so that here we
“ see each of them employed in seeking Christians
“ capable of giving them information.

Joseph

"*Joseph* lives in a country (Holland) where
"Christians are divided into several sects, such as
"Roman Catholicks, Calvinists, Lutherans, Greeks,
"Anabaptists. He is in a condition of enquiring
"into the tenets of each, and determining where
"truth is.

"*Benjamin* is not in a condition of making the
"same enquiry. In the country where he lives
"(Avignon) only one sect of Christians is allowed.
"His situation appears much less advantageous than
"that of *Joseph*. After he has thoroughly examin-
"ed the doctrine and conduct of such Christians, he
"has more dislike to them than ever; and concludes
"that, if the Christians, whom he knows not, are
"no better, they are not in possession of the truth.
"However, he suspends his judgment, and proposes
"to travel for a thorough information.

"Let us return to *Joseph*. Without leaving his
"own country, he takes a view of the different sects
"of Christians, applying himself to the doctors of
"each successively.

"He finds men more eager in extolling the ex-
"cellency of their own particular sect over the rest,
"than in shewing the superior excellency of Chris-
"tianity in general. What gives him most per-
"plexity is, that each sect pretends to be the depo-
"sitory of pure truth, exclusive of all the rest.

"He finds among the doctors of each sect a spirit
"of partiality, positive and passionate against all

“other parties. Those of the infallible sect, in particular, shock and discourage him in proportion to the attempts they make for gaining him.

“From the ecclesiastics, he goes to the laity; where he finds the mind possessed with the same prejudices; a set of men, among whom religion is placed only in memory, or outward show, to which they give the name of worship; among whom conscience is known only by name; or the advantage they are able to make of that of other men; people, who, in short, idolize themselves, are their own center, and their own end.

“Here now our poor *Joseph* is still more and more embarrassed. His fund of uprightness helps him to discover in the nominal Christians, a *false*, which makes him like them the less, the better he knows them.

“However, he is not yet quite discouraged; he is reduced to a supposition that the religion of Christians is different from their practice; all that puzzles him is the division and opposition of parties. From the laity he goes back to the doctors, and proposes an expedient for informing himself thoroughly of the truth; which is to let him see how they agree in the essentials of religion, and give him a view of that in a simple and precise manner, without requiring him to take the name of one sect or party rather than another,

“ther, or perplexing himself with particular opinions.

“The proposal appears reasonable. A day is fixed for discussing the question. The doctors of each sect chuse such of their number as they esteem furnished with the best abilities; and thus form a sort of synod. The Jew doth not insist on being admitted into it; he is content to wait the result of their deliberation. Let us now see how they proceed.

“At first great civilities and much politeness are used among the doctors; they mutually promise to make some concessions on all sides for the common interest of Christianity: the question here is not concerning the conversion of one single Jew, but of great numbers, who may be influenced by his example; this is a sufficient motive for engaging them to exert themselves in a particular manner.

“They begin with discussing the fundamental points, or the articles of the creed, on which they easily agree; as they do likewise in admitting the scripture to be the word of God.

“Thus far they are of a mind. One of the company proposes to stop here, and present the Jew with the Christian religion in a plain, and at the same time extensive manner, without embarrassing him with the particular senses, which each party pretends to find in the sacred writings.

" The proposal is unanimously hissed ; accord-
 " ing to them, the thing is impracticable, and sub-
 " ject to a thousand inconveniences. After all,
 " what sort of a Christian would a man be, who is
 " not first instructed by the doctors in the true sense
 " of the scripture ; who rests satisfied with being a
 " Christian in general, without declaring for any
 " particular religion ? A Christian like this would
 " be a man without religion ; and we all know how
 " pernicious a thing it is to profess an indifference
 " to particular religions, not to say sects. Hence it
 " is unanimously concluded, that if the Jew em-
 " braces Christianity, he must at the same time de-
 " clare for some particular religion, must take one
 " side or another ; in a word, he must have a reli-
 " gion.

" Here they are once more all of a mind. There
 " remains now but one point to be cleared up or
 " decided, viz. which is the true religion, which
 " the best adapted for securing salvation ; in short,
 " which is most agreeable to the gospel, and the
 " doctrine of the apostles.

" This is the difficult point ; the more they strive
 " to clear it up, the more perplexed it appears. Af-
 " ter five or six hours employed in the discussion of
 " this single question, every one is just where he
 " begun ; each pretends that his own religion is the
 " only one exempt from error, and teaches the evan-
 " gelical truth in all its purity.

Joseph

Joseph by this time grows impatient to know the conclusion of the doctors: he is introduced into the assembly: is told what has passed: that the whole company are perfectly agreed on all points, except the last, which relates to his choice of a party. Upon this, the moderators or deans of each party, one after another, entertain *Joseph* with an apology for their respective sects: each of them maintains that his alone can justly claim the title of religion; that all the rest are no better than so many sects, where the truth is falsified, and disguised so as not to be known.

Discourses so opposite one to the other, strike *Joseph* quite dumb: he is silent for some time: he recollects what he has read in the Mosaic history concerning the tower of Babel, and the confusion of tongues. This silence gives each of the doctors hopes that he will declare for his sect; and each grows impatient to hear the Jew pronounce in his favour. At last *Joseph* comes to a resolution; he cuts the gordian knot, by declaring that the confusion of tongues must cease among them, particularly among the guides, before he becomes a Christian: that truth being one, cannot be unlike itself: that, if the Christians are really the people of God, there is reason to expect that, sooner or later he will raise up guides, who will not oppose one another: that the conduct of God in regard to the ancient Israelites,

“ is a proof of this : that, as soon as he sees the way
 “ made plain, and the guides united walk first in it,
 “ he will willingly follow them ; since nothing
 “ keeps him at a distance from Christianity, but the
 “ division he sees amongst Christians.

“ *Joseph* upon this retires, without waiting for
 “ any farther reply ; and not meeting with Chris-
 “ tians of a different make from these, during the
 “ course of his whole life, he retains the name of a
 “ Jew ; and under an appearance so despicable in
 “ the eyes of nominal Christians, conceals the in-
 “ terior of a true Christian, or the disposition, which
 “ is the essential part of it.”

Eraustus. Are you not tired, Philo ? The article
 of *Joseph* is somewhat long.

Crito. Let me read that of *Benjamin*. I am
 impatient to know what part he is to act ; that of
Joseph has been very agreeable to me in its kind.

Philo. It gives one a glimpse, in several parts, of
 more than it expresses. Here is matter for several
 reveries. Was I to follow my own inclinations, I
 should reserve the article of *Benjamin* for to-mor-
 row.

Crito. I have not so much patience as you, Philo ;
 I am too desirous of seeing the sequel, to come to
 that resolution. Give me the paper ; I'll read it to
 myself, if you had rather indulge your reveries
 than hear.

Philo.

Philo. Read aloud, Crito; I shall find an opportunity for that another time.

Crito reads.

"We left *Benjamin* big with a design of travelling, in order to make himself acquainted with the several sects of Christians. He sets out, and visits several cities, academies and universities.

"His first observation in general is, that all Christians, of what sect soever, are exactly of the same mind in one point. That point is a love of riches, an insatiable desire of adding to their fortunes. In that respect they are more Jews than the Jews themselves. *Benjamin* cannot enough wonder at seeing men, who acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth, the son of a poor carpenter, for their king, do all in their power for raising themselves to dignities, for enriching themselves; in fine, for being the direct contrary of what he was in this world.

"He finds the same spirit generally diffused through the ecclesiastics of all sects. In this respect, they seem not less the reverse of the fishermen or apostles, than the gross of Christians are of Jesus.

"He asks himself how men, so uniform in the main, whose inclinations are so exactly the same, should be divided, and wrangle about opinions; the difference of which lies, or is considerable, only in the imagination? He is tempted to tell

“ them, they are better agreed than they imagine ;
“ that, instead of being divided into several sects or
“ religions, they are all of the same.

“ What is remarkable is, that they are so at the
“ bottom of their hearts ; they perform not the acts
“ of it out of grimace, or perfunctorily. This re-
“ ligion has an universal influence over all their
“ opinions, and over their whole conduct, even when
“ they do not think of it. Without reflecting on
“ it, they accomplish its precepts.

“ *Benjamin*, conceiving this idea of the power
“ which religion must have over the whole man,
“ can find among the Christians but one religion,
“ which is the same that reigns equally over all
“ corrupt persons, whether Pagans, Jews, or Ma-
“ hometans ; and which at the bottom is nothing
“ but an idolatrous Self-love, divided into as many
“ branches as men have passions and vicious incli-
“ nations.

“ *Benjamin* looked not out for such a religion
“ among Christians ; he enquired for Christianity ;
“ could he enquire for it elsewhere ? What is Chris-
“ tianity then, says he within himself ? Whither
“ must I go to find it ? In the gospel, and in the
“ memory of Christians ?

“ Thereupon he proposes to hear their most ce-
“ lebrated doctors ; he applies successively to seve-
“ ral, and of different sects. Each of them gives
“ so beautiful an idea of Christianity, that *Benjamin*
“ tells

"tells them, at that rate there are no Christians in
"the world. One of them owns, there is but too
"much truth in the observation. To whom do you
"preach then? says the Jew. To Christians in
"appearance, replies the doctor; but, generally
"speaking, to real Pagans.

"Hence *Benjamin* concludes it better for him to
"remain a Jew, with uprightness and the fear of
"God, than enter into a society, where every one
"knows how to disguise himself, so as to appear
"what he is not, and not appear what he is.

"He now resolves to return into his own coun-
"try: he has no farther enquiry to make among
"the Christians; he has conversed with their dif-
"ferent sects, heard their most celebrated doctors,
"and found no uprightness or simplicity among
"them. This is sufficient for discouraging him.

"He sets out; and in an inn meets with a com-
"pany of Christians, who attack him on religion.
"One of them is silent; *Benjamin* looks attentively
"at him, and finds something in his countenance
"that strikes him. He disengages himself from the
"rest, and accosts him. He asks him whether he
"is not a Christian, and why he does not under-
"take to convert him, as the others had done.
"It is, replies he, because I am thinking to be-
"come a Christian myself. Was you not born a
"Christian then, says *Benjamin*? I was indeed born
"of parents called Christians, replies the same per-
"son,

“ son, (to whom we shall give the name of *Sincerus*)
“ but that alone does not make a man a Christian;
“ much more is required. *Benjamin* surprized at
“ this answer, in order to engage him to explain
“ himself, asks him of what religion or sect he is.
“ *Sincerus* replies, that he aspires only at becoming
“ a true Christian, without giving himself the trou-
“ ble of engaging in any sect; that those divisions
“ and oppositions shew they are sects, not religions;
“ because religion is one, and cannot be divided.

“ *Benjamin*, still more astonished at finding a
“ Christian of this make, asks him, whether it is
“ possible for a Jew to become a Christian, without
“ taking the name of some sect, and declaring for
“ it against all others? To which *Sincerus* replies,
“ that if it was possible to be a Christian in former
“ times, before the introduction of sects, it is possible
“ to be one now, without engaging in any: that
“ we are not to judge of Christianity by the dresses
“ with which each sect disguises itself: that it is in
“ itself very simple, and consequently independent
“ of the particular opinions to which men pretend
“ to confine it: that Christianity is, in substance,
“ no more than the religion of Abraham and David,
“ renewed by Jesus: a religion, whose bases are
“ uprightness and obedience to conscience; all the
“ precepts of which are reduced to the creature’s
“ being sincerely devoted to the Creator; a dispo-
“ sition which includes all the sacrifices that the
“ true

“ true children of Abraham may have been obliged
“ to offer, to shew the strength of their faith, and
“ the sincerity of their love.

“ *Benjamin*, whose uprightness has already pre-
“ pared the way for all truths that may be proposed
“ to him, feels the whole force of this. He assures
“ *Sincerus*, that the veil is removed from his eyes ;
“ and that, if he had seen Christianity in this light
“ sooner, he should have been a Christian long
“ before.

“ They afterwards discourse more at large on the
“ life of Jesus, his instructions, his sufferings, and
“ the design of his death. I shall not relate what
“ was said on those subjects. I only add, that *Ben-*
“ *jamin*, by the uprightness of his will, having al-
“ ready the disposition essential to a true Christian,
“ finds no difficulty in becoming such in all respects,
“ and, pursuant to the same disposition, exposing
“ himself to all the persecutions which the false
“ Jews may raise against him.

“ By this example we may see how different cir-
“ cumstances may combine to place persons equal-
“ ly upright in the main, in different points of
“ view, in regard to certain truths.

“ Here now are our two Jews in the same degree
“ of uprightness, and equally faithful in obeying
“ their consciences. By which means, one is
“ brought to the clear knowledge of evangelical
“ truths : the other still remains in the dark, in
“ that

“that respect. But this obscurity cannot render him culpable; it comes from foreign causes, in which his will has no share. Had he been in the same circumstances as *Benjamin*, he too would have become a Christian.

“From all which it may be concluded, that one is not less agreeable to God than the other; though under a different name; and that he is not a Jew or a Christian, who is outwardly such.”

Philo. You will give me leave to pocket the Jews in my turn, *Eraustus*; I have a mind to be acquainted with them; and though they are Jews, I shall not be ashamed to receive their instructions concerning the essence of Christianity.

Crito. You imagine then, *Philo*, that you need only ask to the prejudice of others, in order to obtain your request immediately. Take notice that I oppose you in this point; and, as much a lawyer as you are, you shall not deal with me so easily as you imagine.

Philo. Well, *Crito*, will you refer the matter to *Eraustus*?

Crito. I submit to all he shall say; he need only pronounce.

Eraustus. Since I must decide the matter, each shall take the article he has read.

Crito.

Crito. On that foot, Philo is to pocket *Joseph*, and I *Benjamin*. I think myself well off, and readily submit to the sentence.

Philo. So do I, *Crito*, on condition that we change to-morrow.

D I A L O G U E XI.

CRITO, PHILO, and ERASTUS.

Crito. **D**O you know, *Erastus*, that after our yesterday's bargain, *Philo* was very unwilling to part with *Joseph*, when he had got *Benjamin*? He wanted to keep them both; and I believe would have done so, had not he seen you coming.

Philo. I should have kept them only till this evening, *Crito*; and you might have obliged me so far. I perceive this *Joseph* has several lessons in store for me, and that I am far from being at the bottom as good a Christian as he is.

Crito. Dear *Philo*, what do you mean?

Philo. I mean, *Erastus*; that I should think myself very happy, if my will was in such an equilibrium, as not to resist the impression of any kind of truth, whatever I might suffer for it.

Erastus. You would be so much the happier, *Philo*, in having surmounted all voluntary obstacles to the impressions of truth, as you would then have
very

very few of those we have called involuntary. The sect in which we are born has this advantage over the others, that it doth not form so strong an opposition in us to all that may come from another quarter. We make a profession of leaving the way of examination open to all the world. In our time, particularly, men insist more than formerly on not judging of things by the eyes of others, or by such prejudices as education may have formed. Freedom from prejudice, impartiality, and toleration in point of opinion are in vogue; and though several value themselves on them, without well knowing what they are, they thereby give others an opportunity of making use of them.

Philo. It is certain this way has its advantages, for those who are willing to receive the truth without restriction, and without setting bounds to it; involuntary obstacles are thereby removed. We should not have enjoyed the same liberty in the time of rigid orthodoxy; what profession soever was then made of laying no restraint on men's consciences, they were still kept under a sort of slavery, something like infallibility, from which it was impossible to disengage one's self, without passing for a heretic and a dangerous man.

Erastus. That spirit is not every where extinguished; we still see several marks of it among those who cannot suffer it in their neighbours.

Crito. That spirit of tyranny in matters of religion, seems extinguished among us more than any where else.

Erastus. Though it seems extinguished, we perceive some sparks of it still remaining in several persons, when they happen to be shocked by some strong truths.

Philo. Why must truth, which, in a certain sense, has so many charms, be in another so burthensome, not to say insupportable?

Erastus. If you would understand this, dear Philo, you must distinguish original and universal truth, which is always one, from particular and distinct truths, which are numerous. The latter proceed from the former, and depend on it as the rays on the sun; whereas the former is as independent on the latter, as the sun is of its rays.

Excuse me, if this comparison is somewhat lame. You know it is a common fault in comparisons; and may be much more easily committed, when we are comparing spiritual things with material.

Simple, universal truth has always existed in God; before any creatures were in being, it was what it now is, and ever will be. It has acquired nothing by their existence, and can lose nothing, though they were annihilated.

Particular truths are only a consequence of the existence of the creatures. Were there no creatures, there would be no particular truths. As the
creatures

creatures are several, and distinct one from another; the truths, which are relative to them, are also several, and distinct one from another.

These truths are all that can be known of the works of God, as well in inanimate or irrational, as in animated and rational beings.

All the manifestations which God has made to man of his designs in general, and of the particular means, which may conduct them to happiness.

Here now is a very plain distinction between simple or universal truth, which is but one, and particular or distinct truths, which are many.

Conscience is in all men a witness of simple truth; it is **invariable* and *upright*, without ambiguity, incapable of correction, being itself the rule which ought to correct every thing opposite to it. The disorder and the *false* which is found in man, naturally produce in him a secret and strong aversion to all that can reform him. He dreads the testimony of this simple truth, the authority of which often commands respect, even against his will, and which he cannot contradict. Not being able to contradict it, he at least does all in his power to avoid hearing it. To compass his ends the better, he makes use of a stratagem; he throws himself out of himself, and applies himself entirely to study, or the knowledge of particular truths. In

* See the second and third letters of *Erasmus to Crito*.

their variety he finds charms and advantages, the most considerable of which, is that of forgetting himself, and almost putting it out of his power to understand the too sincere language of simple truth.

Philo. I imagine, Eraſtus, I gueſs what you aim at. The conſtrast which I ſee in man, in regard to truth, diſappears, or iſ unfolded by the diſtinction you have made. I conceive, that by the truth, which has ſo many charms for him, and of which the generality of mankind is ſo greedy, we are not to underſtand ſimple truth, which is one; but diſtinct or particular truths, which are many.

Eraſtus. It would be great pity, dear Philo, to explain things better to you, ſince you underſtand them at half a word.

Philo. However, Eraſtus, I beg you would explain what I am going to aſk you.

Among particular truths, I place thoſe which relate to religion, and are revealed in the ſcripture. Why do the ſame truths, which, when taken in a certain ſenſe, give men no pain, become inſupportable to them, when viewed in another manner? I know ſome learned men, who profeſs themſelves never tired of the ſtudy of religion. The beauties they diſcover in it charm them; but then they dare not conſider it in a certain light, and they would take it very ill, were they forced to fix their ſight on it.

Eraſtus.

Eraſtus. Man can ſuffer nothing from the particular truths of religion, only as they contribute toward awakening in him the testimony of conſcience or ſimple truth. The moſt preſſing truths are diverſions to thoſe who view them in a controverſial or critical way. Hence ariſes a diverſity and motion, which are of great ſervice to one who dreads hearing the ſimple language of truth too diſtinctly. All the borrowed ornaments which men employ for giving, as they pretend, more force to certain truths, diſfigure and weaken them, by drawing them out of their natural ſimplicity.

Though, ſtrictly ſpeaking, only *primitive* and *universal truth* is ſimple, yet particular truths, as they proceed from the ſame truth, have likewiſe in their origin a ſort of ſimplicity, which unites them to ſimple truth. By the natural relation between them, one ſhould be the key to the reſt ; *ſimple* and *universal truth* ſhould be to *diſtinct truths*, what light is to objects. Without loſing any thing of its ſimplicity, it diſcovers their diverſity and differences ; it ſhews them ſuch as they are, provided they are not diſguiſed by any thing foreign to their nature, and the eye be free from all obſtacles which may hinder it from ſeeing them.

Hence I conclude, that were the truths of religion diveſted of all thoſe diſguiſes put on them by men ; were they preſented in their utmoſt ſimplicity to men, in whom conſcience is not quite extinguished,

tinguished, those very particular truths would naturally refer them to simple and universal truth; as simple truth would conduct them insensibly, and by degrees, to the distinct knowledge of particular truths.

Crito. I know not where I am, Erastus; methinks this is the first day that I begin to have a glimpse of truth. Your distinction between simple and universal truth, and particular truths, opens my eyes to an infinity of things. I see what made me so warm in the pursuit of what I called truth.

Philo. I now understand why I relished certain truths, which you explained in our walks, while most of them gave me inexpressible pain. Those which had a tendency to overthrow certain vulgar opinions, certain common practices, which are a sort of pedantry in religion, gave me much pleasure. But as you dwelt most on truths which shocked me, by awakening a something that condemned me, I have passed my time but very indifferently.

Erastus. Dear Philo, you demonstrate, by your own experience, the truth of what I just now said concerning the relation between particular truths, and simple truth, when they are presented in a certain light, that is, simple in their way.

Philo. I think I understand you, Erastus. The truth which regards the existence of conscience, is certainly one of the most simple, and what ought to refer us most directly to conscience itself. But had
you

you discussed the same truth in a critical or controversial manner, setting forth the different opinions of divines on that subject, instead of feeling pain, I should have been well diverted with it, and perhaps more so than with any other entertainment. But, as you refer me to what I feel and experience, and my sentiment, being thus awakened, said much more to me than your strongest expressions, I was tormented more than can be imagined.

Eraſtus. You would have suffered much less, Philo, had you yielded sooner to the testimony of truth, which attacked you both within and without at the same time.

However, the correspondence, which subsisted in you, between those two testimonies, shews that their way was not obstructed by very strong obstacles. Those who have raised almost unsurmountable barricades between themselves and truth, feel less pain for a time; but know not what torment their conduct will one day give them.

Philo. I have not forgot an expression, which you let fall on that subject, in one of our walks. The substance of it was, that truth will lose none of its rights; and that sooner or later, in this life, or in the next, we shall be obliged to restore all we have usurped from it. I then experienced what you have said to-day, that particular truths, as they are simple, naturally and directly refer a man to the simple testimony of truth. That expression sent me immediately

immediately into myself, and I was so sensibly affected with the truth of it, that I had no need to ask you for proofs of it.

Erastus. The most simple truths are, by their relation with the primitive truth, so much above proofs, that they appear doubtful only when men attempt to prove them. The bare idea or sense we have of them, proves their existence. Thus the existence of conscience is proved by its language : it is heard ; therefore it exists : its testimony is invariably right ; therefore it is infallible : its testimony is infallible ; therefore the particular truths which it adopts are undoubted ; and that purely because they want no other proofs.

Is this good reasoning ? What say you, Crito ? Have I any cause to regret the expence I have been at in learning so fine a science ?

Crito. You are not yet acquainted with the greatest secrets of that science, Erastus ; and therefore you may regret your expence. The truths which you have been proving, are in themselves so evident, that all the syllogisms in the world can make no addition to them. The art would be in finding arguments for demonstration of the contrary. Yours amount to this : it is day, therefore light exists : I see that light ; therefore I have eyes. I cannot doubt of what my eyes see at noon-day. Now they tell me I am in the walks, and that Erastus and Philo are on each side of me ;

G

ergo,

ergo, the thing is undoubted. I need no other proofs. Pray tell me, Erasmus, what is the great effect of this argument? Have we now more certainty than before, that it is day, that light exists, that we have eyes, and that we are walking?

Erasmus. The great effect of this argument is, that I have begun to doubt, whether it be day, whether I have eyes, and whether I am walking with Crito and Philo?

Crito. You see, therefore, dear Erasmus, that your skill is not great, when you undertake to prove only such truths as are more evident in themselves than by all the arguments that can be used. The art would be to demonstrate, for example, that it is not day at present, that we are not walking; and that, when our eyes tell us we are, they deceive us.

Philo. In reality, what would be the use of syllogisms, if we were only to demonstrate that it is day at noon; and if they did not furnish us with the secret of proving clearly, that black is white, and white black? But, raillery apart; it is good to have to deal with such refined philosophers as Crito; he immediately understood the tendency of Erasmus's arguments, and then carried on the jest at his ease. I own I am duller of apprehension, and did not at first comprehend what Erasmus would be at.

Erasmus.

Erastus. It is evidently ridiculous to employ arguments or syllogisms, to demonstrate things, which have nothing doubtful in them, and to which sense bears an incontestable evidence. It is a mere banter to undertake to prove to a man who has good eyes, that he is not blind; he knows more of the matter from his own sense, than by the most demonstrative proofs.

Philo. Men seem to have attempted to stifle the sense of simple truth, by the crouds of proofs and arguments, which they have advanced for establishing certain particular truths.

Erastus. Or rather, for establishing certain opinions, to which they have given the name of truths, as appears from the opposition and contrariety of the same opinions; whereas truth cannot contradict itself.

Crito. Dear Erastus, this is a syllogism in form; for the future you shall not be allowed to condemn the use of them.

Erastus. If I fall into them without knowing it, Crito, how can I help it? However, I must tell you, that if I have appeared an enemy to syllogisms or arguments, it is not the form that offends me, but the use made of them for obscuring the true, and giving a colour to the false. By this art the doctrine of each sect have found means to give the most contrary opinions the face of truth, which has made them pass under that name. Thus

they have shewn, that truth may be opposite to itself, and still be truth. Is not this a wonderful art?

Philo. It seems that truth has been an apple of discord among men; a subject of division, and the occasion of battles more bloody than those fought at the siege of Troy.

Crito. In reality, it cannot be easily determined whether it has been more advantageous than disadvantageous to them; and whether it had not been better Where are you, Erasmus? Did you hear what Philo has been saying?

Erasmus. I heard him so well, that his words have thrown me into my reveries; and I believe I shall be good for nothing else to-day.

Philo to Crito. That is as much as to say, we shall do well to retire, and let him muse at his leisure.

Erasmus. You guess so well, dear Philo, that I have no reply to make.

Crito. Here we must do ourselves justice with a good grace, and without much disinterestedness. Erasmus's reveries have hitherto done us no harm; and how do we know

Philo. I understand you, Crito; and so let us go, without making any farther bargain.

DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE XII.

CRITO and PHILO.

Crito. **D**O you know, Philo, that our friend did not lie in town last night? I sent to his house this morning, and his servant said he had not seen him since yesterday, that probably he was gone into the country.

Philo. His reveries may have carried him insensibly to N——'s seat. He will not be allowed to return soon. I should be patient under the loss of his company, if he would make us amends by communicating his reveries.

Crito. Perhaps he has done that.—What will you say, Philo, if I guessed right?

Philo. I shall say you have a mind to set up for a conjurer; but I will let you see I am as much so as you; for I imagine you play a sure game.

Crito. Taking a letter out of his pocket.] Here is a letter, that was delivered to me, as I came out. Do you know that hand?

Philo. It is Erastus's; and, what is more, the letter is directed to Philo: if you beg hard, I will communicate the contents of it to you.

Crito. You would not be very well pleased, Philo, with keeping it to yourself. Shall I read it?

Philo. With all my heart, Crito; but we must retire into the shade. There is a bench sheltered from the sun.

They sit down, and CRITO reads.

A LETTER from ERASTUS to CRITO.

“SINCE you gave occasion to my reveries,
 “Philo, you shall be plagued with them.
 “You laugh at the penance; but perhaps it will
 “not prove so easy as you imagine. How do you
 “know whether, while I am in my reveries, I may
 “not carry you into some desolate country, or some
 “labyrinth, out of which you will not easily find
 “your way? If so, blame only yourself, or your
 “comparison of the apple of discord, since that
 “gave birth to my reveries.

“I shall not tell you that they led me insensibly
 “to N——’s country-house, where I am at present.
 “They have made me take another road,
 “which I will trace out to you, if I can. You
 “shall then tell me whether you are in the humour
 “of bearing me company.

“At first I found myself in a labyrinth, when I
 “was considering truth under the emblem of the
 “apple of discord, as the cause of all the debates,
 “divisions, and endless contests, which reign among
 “men. What is truth? said I: Is it a good, or
 “an

"an evil? Can the world dispense with its absence?
"Can it even subsist without it? And would not
"the idea of a world without truth be an idea of a
"chaos? But, once more, What is truth? Here
"I recollected the distinction we made yesterday
"between simple, universal truth, which is one;
"and distinct or particular truths, which are many.
"I found this distinction might be of great use in
"several respects; but that, in a certain light, it
"was still imperfect, or stood in need of some ex-
"planation. I thought that, at the bottom, dis-
"tinct truths were of so different a nature from
"simple truth, that they could not be called by
"the same name.

"It must be acknowledged, our language is so
"barren of expressions, that we are often obliged
"to employ the same terms for expressing things
"very different.

"For example, what two things are more dif-
"ferent than simple, universal truth, living, eter-
"nal truth, the source of all truth, is from a fact,
"done at such a time, in such a place, and attend-
"ed with such circumstances, which is called
"truth? Men give the same name to the differ-
"ent senses they pretend to find in the scripture.
"Every one adheres to that which he has adopted,
"defends it, and supports it as the only one that
"is passible, exclusive of all the opposite senses.
"Should not the word opinion be here used in its

“place? This will appear, if we consider that,
“among those opposite senses, some are infallibly
“false, and perhaps more so than are true: they
“may therefore be termed true or false, as taken in
“general. Men talk of true or false opinions;
“but they never think of speaking true or false
“truths.

“Truth is always truth. If what has appeared
“to us true at one time, appears false at another,
“we do not say that truth is become false; but
“that we mistook falsehood for truth.

“Truth then remains always invariable. *It is
“never opposite to itself; what it was yesterday,
“it is to-day. On that foot, is it the apple of
“discord? or is that appellation due to the opini-
“ons, which men have graced with the name of
“truth? Here certainly is the explanation of the
“riddle; and plain good sense cannot disown it.
“That alone tells us, no one can give what he
“has not: that light cannot produce darkness:
“that what is simple and uniform cannot produce
“division and contrariety. Thus truth is cleared
“of the disorders, which it has seemed to cause
“among men; and at the same time men may be
“undeceived as to the passion they have seemed to
“entertain for truth. Here is a key, which opens
“one of the doors of the labyrinth; but yet we
“are not quite out of it; fresh difficulties are to
“be surmounted; and this among others.

“Has

“Has not God manifested the truth to mankind
“in the holy scripture? And is it from the scrip-
“ture that men have drawn those opposite opini-
“ons, which have produced endless contests? This
“being granted, the scripture has been to them a
“real apple of discord. But the holy scripture is
“truth; therefore what may be ascribed to the
“holy scripture, may be ascribed to truth.

“Men are fond of the opinions they have em-
“braced: they have found them in the holy scrip-
“ture; the holy scripture is truth; therefore men
“are fond of truth. These now are very strong
“arguments; I would endeavour to answer them,
“was I not seized with a drowsiness still more
“strong, to which I am absolutely obliged to yield.
“I reserve the remainder of my reveries till to-
“morrow. If I do not give you them in writing,
“perhaps you may have them in the walks.”

Crito. Well, Philo, what say you to our
friend's reveries?

[Here Erastus comes, hides himself behind a
tree, and listens to the discourse.]

Philo. I say he had good reason to make me
expect they would lead me into a labyrinth, out
of which I should not easily find my way. But I
think him a little malicious, for carrying us in,
and then leaving us to get out as well as we can.
If I write to him, I shall rattle him off to some
purpose.

Crito. You are resolved to be angry in your turn then, Philo ; and do not observe that Erasmus has already done you a signal piece of service, in disengaging you from the embarrassment into which you had brought him by your objection about the apple of discord. He only could have cleared up the matter.

Philo. I condemn myself, dear Crito, and perceive I am coming into a good humour again. My impatience to hear an answer to the arguments, with which he concludes his letter, had put me into an ill one. I believe, if he does not return to-day, I shall be tempted to go to him. .

Erasmus, (without being seen.) Do you want a conveniency for carrying you thither ?

Philo. Is it a spirit we hear ?

Crito. Whence came that voice ? We must arm ourselves with courage.

Erasmus, appearing. Without doubt, since it is the voice of a magician.

Philo. Be as much a magician as you please, we are not much afraid of you ; but who would have ventured to hope to see you here to-day ? I was apprehensive that N—— would detain you several days longer.

Erasmus. He would have done so, had it been in his power ; but I made my escape without asking leave. I went thither in a reverie, I left the house.

house in a reverie, and met you here at the time appointed, to——

Crito. Do you know, Erastus, that Philo was in a great passion with you, some moments ago?

Erastus. In quality of a magician, I have had information of it; and came to offer him all the assistance in my power, for getting out of the labyrinth, in which I had left him.

Philo. I charged you with a little malice, dear Erastus; but I see it was none of the blackest, any more than the magic which enables you to guess so exactly. You have without doubt brought the sequel of your reveries.

Erastus. I am too much a man of my word to fail in that point. To prevent their escape, I have made no scruple of committing them to as close a prison as I did our two Jews. I shall deliver them into your hands, that you may make what use of them you please.

Philo. I think that will be to read them; and that we have time enough for doing so.

He reads.

“In reply to the arguments proposed, I say first,
“that the holy scripture is, properly speaking, not
“truth, but a testimony of truth. This testimony
“is expressed in words susceptible of different sen-
“ses; every man has there found a sense suitable
“to his passions or prejudices. The prejudices

“ and passions of men, being always opposite; have
 “ produced divisions by the opposite opinions, which
 “ proceed from them. Here now is the apple of
 “ discord. If the scripture has been the cause of
 “ such discord, as it cannot be denied, is truth an-
 “ swerable for it? All that may be attributed to the
 “ scripture, cannot in every sense be ascribed to
 “ truth. If men are fond of opinions, which they
 “ have drawn from the scripture, it doth not thence
 “ follow that they are fond of truth. Such opini-
 “ ons are their own work, the fruit of their own
 “ penetration and discernment; they depend on the
 “ particular sense which men have fixed to such or
 “ such passages of scripture. That particular sense
 “ appeared to them most proper for supporting their
 “ party in opposition to all others. They would be
 “ mortified if truth should detect the falsity of it.
 “ On that foot, of what are they fond? Of truth,
 “ or of themselves?”

Philo. Here now is enough for undeceiving men,
 in regard to their pretended passion for truth. And
 I must own that, till now, I have loved only the
 shadow and appearances of it; and begin to believe
 no character so uncommon in the world as that of
 a sincere lover of truth.

Erasmus. But, dear Philo, where shall we find
 such an one? A man who sets no limits to truth,
 makes no resistance, but is willing to receive it at
 all

all hazards, and in what manner soever it may present itself; a man, who, when he gets a glimpse of it, will not enquire, before he allows it entrance, whether it reproves or applauds him, whether it opposes, or chimes in with his own opinions and inclinations; whether it may not disconcert the plans he has formed; in short, whether it may not prejudice his temporal interest, his reputation or his fortune: a man, I say, who, without debating on the matter, should open all passages to truth, would be a phoenix in his kind.

Philo. I think I know one, whom this picture resembles.

Eraustus. I perceive you have Eraustus in view. Be pleased to remember that this picture is very different from what he drew of himself some days ago. Let me refer you to it.* I will add, without the least affectation of modesty, that I so often catch myself in a secret opposition to truth, whenever it opposes my inclinations, that there is no need of arguments for proving it.

Philo. If my lady Modesty had not lost all credit with you, I should have been ready to place her here; but you have unluckily shut her out. Do you know that I frequently bewail her absence? For example, when I am obliged to believe my friends literally in what they speak to their own disadvantage; and

• Dialogue IX.

much

much more, when I perceive I shall be believed in what I may say of myself in the same way; and that no abatement will be made, in order to place it to the account of modesty: is not this very mortifying? And is she not very serviceable to such as admit her into their company? They may lay what they please on her; not to say, that she is of use for keeping up conversation, which would be soon exhausted, if truth alone was admitted.

Crito. Now you speak of truth, shall we go on with Erastus's reveries? Where did we leave off?

Philo. I had finished the article, in which it is proved that men, instead of being fond of truth, are fond of their own works, and of the opinions they have framed. He proceeds thus:

"I may be called on to prove what I have advanced, viz. that all that may be said of truth cannot be justly applied to the scripture; and that, on the contrary, what may be said of the scripture cannot be applied to truth. What difference do you make between them? I ask in my turn, what difference is there between a testimony given in favour of a person, and the person himself; between a dissertation on light, and light itself? Such is the difference between the scripture and truth. The former is a testimony in favour of the latter; but it cannot be called truth, unless the term be taken in an improper sense, as Serenus understood it the other day of a manuscript, which treats of

"the

"the stars. He asked L . . . if he had brought the
"stars. This way of speaking never deceives any
"man in things that fall under the cognizance of
"the senses. A book which should contain the
"picture of a prince, his history, the form of his
"government, &c. was never taken for the prince
"himself; and you may say as often as you please,
"that you have Lewis XIV. in your pocket, with-
"out exciting laughter.

"But the case is not the same, in regard to truth.
"Men have insensibly fallen into mistakes: they
"have made the testimony stand for truth itself:
"they have persuaded themselves, that being perfect
"masters of the scripture, as their phrase is, is
"being masters of truth: they have called it the
"light, the infallible guide; in a word, pure truth:
"They have stopt at the testimony, and thus ren-
"dered it useless, and hindered its effect; nay more;
"they have actually turned it against themselves:
"Our Saviour, for example, tells the Jews, that
"the scriptures testified of him; but that they would
"not come to him, to have life.

"To what purpose is a testimony, of which men
"will make no use? it only serves to condemn
"those, who profess to receive it. Moses, in whom
"you place your hope, will condemn you.

"The holy scripture is in regard to truth what
"John the Baptist was to Jesus. We read that
"St. John was not the light, but was sent to bear
"witness

" witness of the light. This gives us a complete
" idea of the relation between the holy scripture
" and truth, and at the same time shews the dif-
" ference between them.

" Truth considered under the emblem of light,
" employed me a long time in my reveries. I
" found natural light a visible representation of
" truth or spiritual light; and that what the former
" is in regard to bodies and sensible objects, the
" latter is, in a very eminent degree, in regard to
" spirits and invisible objects: that there is no other
" difference between those two lights than what
" ought necessarily to subsist between the copy and
" the original; between a material and spiritual
" being; between a being void of understanding
" or life, and a living intelligent being; between
" a created and an uncreated being. That in
" other respects, their properties and effects are
" exactly the same in regard to their proper sub-
" jects. But it will be asked, Is truth uncreated?
" Can that epithet be applied to any but God?

" I ask in my turn, whether simple, primitive
" truth has any beginning: whether there ever was
" a time when it did not exist, and if it is possible
" to separate it from the divinity one moment; or
" whether the idea of the divinity and that of truth
" are not inseparably connected? I think no man
" will dispute this; it is therefore incontestable
" that

“that simple truth has always existed in God, and
“in nothing differs from God himself.

“Here the distinction, we made yesterday between *simple* or *universal* truth, and *distinct* or
“*particular truths*, takes place. It shews us the
“difference between created truths and uncreated
“truth. The latter is *one, simple* and *universal*:
“the former are *many, distinct* and *limited*. Was
“I talking to stupid persons, I should here explain
“how the idea of simplicity, universality and unity
“are inseparably connected.”

Philo. I am stupid enough, dear Erastus, to
own I should be pleased with such an explanation.

Erastus. You are unlucky, *Philo*; you give
yourself the character of stupidity, only to make me
talk of things which you know better than I do.
Were you a child, I would tell you that what is
universal is *one*; because there cannot be two uni-
versal beings: for if they were two, each would
be a particular being, not the universal being.

If universality and unity are inseparable, simpli-
city is not less so from both. What is simple, must
be universal; otherwise it would not be simple.
What is not composed of several parts, is one: what
is one, is simple. We have demonstrated that what
is one is universal. Ergo, what is simple is uni-
versal, and one; as what is one, is simple and uni-
versal.

Well,

Well, Gentlemen banterers, need I go any farther? How they laugh in their sleeve at having made me deal in ergo's in spite of my teeth!

Philo. This is just what we desired of you, *Eraustus*; methinks, with all your aversion to syllogisms, you know well enough how to make your advantage of them.

Eraustus. A wonderful advantage, to be able to demonstrate, by a set of syllogisms, such things as are obvious to every man's eyes, as soon as he will open them.

Crito. Let us go on with our reveries; give me them, *Philo*, I will read in my turn.

Eraustus. I think we had better reserve the sequel for to-morrow, and at present think of walking to town.

Crito. I will put the reveries in my pocket then. I see *Philo's* jealousy; but with his leave, he shall be satisfied with the beginning of them. I shall not now part with what I have; it is enough that I promise to give a good account of them to-morrow.

DIALOGUE XIII.

CRITO, PHILO, and ERAUSTUS.

Crito. **I** Have waited here half an hour with the reveries in my hand. You imagine, perhaps, that I was very impatient for your coming; but

but indeed I was not ; I found the loss of your company sufficiently made up to me by the pleasure that——

Philo. A very obliging speech truly ! To prefer the reveries of your friends to your friends themselves.

Eraſtus. More obliging than you imagine, Philo ; my self-love is not less agreeably flattered by the reception which Crito gives my reveries, than by what he would give my person.

Philo. You are always talking of your self-love ; one would think you made it your business to persuade us you are influenced by that passion in all you do.

Eraſtus. Philo is always entertaining fine ideas of me. I would fain know which is most to my commendation ; to deceive you to my own advantage, or to my disadvantage ; that you should think me better or worse than I am.

Philo. A pleasant question ! if you allow us to appeal to the voices, or rather the practice of all honest men, you will find it immediately decided, that it is infinitely better to deceive men to our advantage than to our disadvantage, and appear better than we are rather than worse. If the question is to be decided by the number or plurality of voices, Eraſtus, you are condemned, since you maintain it would be better for you to appear a less honest man than you are.

Eraſtus.

Eraſtus. The unanimous concurrence to the deciſion, would ſhew how much credit truth has in the world.

Crito. The advantage of being applauded or eſteemed will excuſe us, if we ſometimes make free with it.

Philo. But are you not apprehenſive, *Eraſtus*, of injuring truth, by appearing leſs good than you are ?

Eraſtus. The hazard is not conſiderable on that ſide, dear *Philo* ; and I am very ſenſible that whatever I ſay, you will always think me better or leſs bad than I am. I muſt tell you, however, that I have no fixed deſign of deceiving you, to my own diſadvantage ; I only intended to let you know, that if that could happen, and if, while I acted naturally, I ſhould give you room to think me worſe than I am ; I ſhould run leſs hazard by ſo doing, than if by acting leſs naturally I gave you room to ſuppoſe me better than I am. Will you know the reaſon ? It is, becauſe in the former caſe truth would ſooner or later undeceive you ; and in the mean time, I ſhould make my advantage of your miſtake. Whereas the caſe would not be the ſame on the other ſide, as I ſhould give occaſion to your miſtake, by offending againſt ſincerity or truth ; which would be revenged on me, by humbling me in proportion to the falſe elevation, to which I aſpired. By undeceiving

deceiving you in that point, it would give me the utmost confusion.

Crito. Dear Erastus, you have now given me a glimpse of more truths than you have explained. You frequently have the other world in view, when you are speaking of truth, and the restitutions we shall be obliged to make to it sooner or later. But is there no way of knowing what idea you have of that other world? You talk of it so familiarly, that one would think you have a correspondence there.

Philo. I have often had the same question at my tongue's-end.

Erastus. Would you have me, in quality of a magician, raise some spirit from thence? If so, you must tell me of what colour you would have it.

Crito. I perceive that, in quality of a magician, you want to get rid of us; but you shall not escape this time. As much a magician as you are, you shall give us a direct and plain answer.

Erastus. You will excuse my answering you to-day, dear Crito, if I promise you on the word of an honest magician, to put a manuscript into your hands, that will give you more satisfaction than I can.

Crito. Shall we allow him quarter on these terms, Philo?

Philo. Yes; provided it be not something we have seen already.

Erastus.

Eraſtus. Have you ſeen a manuſcript, entitled,
 “ Various ſentiments of ſome Divines, concerning
 “ the State of Souls ſeparated from their Bodies,
 “ in fourteen letters ?”

Philo. I have ſeen nothing of that ſort.

Crito. Nor I.

Philo. Let us take his word, Crito ; and in the
 mean time, return to our reveries : they are in your
 hands. Shall I read them ? Where did we leave
 off yeſterday ?

He reads. Crito. I have the place.

“ Uncreated truth is *one, ſimple* and *universal*.
 “ Created truths are *ſeveral, diſtinct* and *bounded*.
 “ Here again, the ſimilitude of light takes place ;
 “ which, without loſing any thing of its ſimplicity,
 “ diſcovers an infinity of different objects.

“ The diverſity of objects, which light expoſes
 “ to view, is an emblem of the diverſity of parti-
 “ cular truths. Simple truth diſcovers them in
 “ their true light. That only ſhews their true diſ-
 “ tinction and relations.

“ As the objects, diſplayed by the light, are very
 “ different from light itſelf ; ſo diſtinct or particu-
 “ lar truths manifested by ſimple truth, are very
 “ different from ſimple truth itſelf. We obſerved
 “ yeſterday, that particular truths are relative to
 “ creatures : that ſome of them are referred to ina-
 “ nimate

"nimate and irrational creatures, and others to
"intelligent beings.

"The first of these truths are called *physical*: the
"second *moral*. Physical truth falls partly under
"the cognizance of the senses, and partly under
"that of reasoning. What we know of them by
"sense or experience is not doubtful or ambiguous ;
"what we know of them by way of reasoning,
"varies ad infinitum."

Eraſtus. Stop one moment, if you please, Crito.
We are not here disputing in a philosophical man-
ner, concerning the nature of objects, which are
known by the evidence of the senses, but concern-
ing the effect or impression made by the same
objects on the sentiment; an impression which
never varies. It is to no purpose for men, to pre-
tend to demonstrate by reasoning, that fire is not
hot, honey not sweet, snow not white, &c. The
question is not, I say, whether fire is hot; but whe-
ther the impression, which I receive from it, is not
invariably the same; whether, for example, there
be any doubt that on putting my hand into the fire,
I shall feel what is called burning. As I speak to
philosophers, I am obliged to prevent such objec-
tions, as they might make in that character; and
apprise them they have to do, not with a natura-
list, but a reveur, who is telling his reveries. They
would get no honour by engaging with him; as a
reveur

reveur who does not love fighting, he would soon quit the field. Now, Crito, you may go on when you please.

Crito. Here is a reveur, who thinks he may take all manner of liberties, and even that of bantering the poor philosophers. He should not come off so, were I not afraid of interrupting our reading.

He reads.

" *Moral truths* are of a nature relative to that of
" a free and intelligent being. They tend to let
" him know what he is, and whence he derives his
" origin; the end of his creation, and the means
" he is to take for arriving at, and attaining it.

" The same truths, more detailed and particu-
" larized, help him to perceive the obstacles in his
" way to that end; and at the same time, point
" out the road he is to take, and the most proper
" means for surmounting those obstacles.

" These truths re-unite or comprehend all that
" can be called religion. By that term I under-
" stand, not only what has been revealed to men
" in the law or the gospel; but what is termed
" natural religion; such truths as men might have
" known without, by the testimony of nature, and
" within by that of conscience.

" This is the foundation of the Christian reli-
" gion; Christianity adds nothing to it, as to the
" substance and essential part; but serves to ex-
" plain

plain it, and shew men the use they may make of it. It, in a particular manner, manifests the designs of the Creator over his creatures, the love he has for them, and the proofs he has given them of that affection. It affords sensible proofs or testimonies of all this. These are publick facts, examples, miracles, and precepts explained. Such particularities may be termed distinct, or particular truths.

These truths have been communicated to us in the writings of persons chosen by God for that purpose; who testify what they have seen or heard. Such is the idea they give us of their own writings; and this demonstrates the truth of what we have advanced, *That scripture is not truth, but an evidence of truth.* I add, that, as the men, who have given this evidence, were inspired, or directed by God in what they wrote, we may call the scripture an exterior or indirect evidence, which truth gives of itself."

Philo. I find that what has been read, by reuniting religion almost into a point, places it in a light very different from that given it by those divisions and subdivisions, by which it is usually described.

Crito. Do you not likewise observe, that by this re-union, we discover a distinction of three things, commonly confounded together, by being

H

equally

equally called truth: *The holy scripture, particular truths, and universal truth.*

Erastus. Nothing distinguishes objects better than what re-unites them. When a man has once found the center, he will be easily carried, by the several lines, to the circumference. But those who rest satisfied with running round the circumference, and examining each line separately, may describe the surface of the circle without ever coming to the center.

Truth is the center and soul of religion; no man will venture to dispute it. But what idea do we form of this soul? An idea of something inanimate, of one or more truths, to be learnt, believed, and considered separately; some designed for speculation, others for practice. This is the ideal men frame of religion, and truth, which is the soul of it; or rather of the truths, which are so many souls of it: for if truth is not one, and religion is composed of several truths independent one of the other, it must have several souls, and at the same time several centers.

Philo. This comparison explains a great number of things. It shews how ridiculous the ideas are, which the generality of mankind entertain of religion or truth. I now understand why truth has hitherto given me the slip, even when I imagined myself most secure of it. I contented myself with some of its branches only.

Erastus

Eraſtus. You have hit the nail on the head. The branches of a tree, ſeparated from the trunk, belong to the tree no longer; becauſe they ceaſe to partake of the ſap. Particular truths, ſeparated from ſimple truth, ceaſe to belong to truth, as they no longer partake of the life of it. As ſoon as they ceaſe to belong to truth, they belong to each particular perſon who makes them his own; as the branches ſeparated from the trunk, by ceaſing to belong to it, belong to him, who has plucked them. He may indeed handle his branches, give them what form he pleaſes, and make very pretty curioſities with them, which will place his ſkill and art in an advantageous light. This has been the practice of men in regard to truth, and the branches they have plucked from it. They have handled them freely: they have worked them into all manner of ſhapes at pleaſure: they have gained the admiration of the world by the dexterity of their wit, and the delicacy of their genius, diſplayed in the turn, the form, and variety which they have given to ſuch common truths.

They have ſtill been called truths, as the aforeſaid works retain the name of walnut-tree or olive.

But what do men admire in thoſe works? And what is the deſign of the artiſt? Is it to make the wood be admired; or the art employed in working it? What is admired in a fine treatiſe? And what doth the author deſign we ſhall admire in

it? Is it the truth, of which he treats, considered in itself; or the manner in which he treats of it; the turn, the form, the delicacy, in a word, the sublimeness of his genius? For your satisfaction, tell him you have a relish for the same truth, separately from his book, and you will see how he will receive you. You will pass, in his opinion, for a man of as good a taste, as I should in the opinion of an artist, on telling him I set as much value on a rough branch of a walnut-tree, as on the best of his works.

I should indeed be in the wrong, if I set no value on works so curiously finished; as I should be unjust, to an ingenious author, if I had no regard for the turn and graces he might give to what he calls truth. Each of those works may have its use; the former may amuse children; the latter, men of sense.

In order to give every thing its true name; let us call the branches plucked from the walnut-tree, dry wood; and the branches of truth, separated from universal truth, opinions.

Crito. May it not be added, that of those branches, on which men have bestowed the appellation of truths, they have made little idols, and offered incense to them; unless it would be more proper to say, they have paid that compliment to the skill shewn in the form given them. Every one has set a price on his own performance, has given it a fine name;

name ; into which that of truth has always been foisted. Methinks, the name of truth is at present in each sect, what Diana of the Ephesians was at Ephesus in St. Paul's time.

Eraſtus. Conſequently, woe be to him, who ſhould attempt to diſcredit the ingenious works, which the artiſts of each ſect make in honour of it. But where are our reveries carrying us ?

Crito. Shall I go on, Eraſtus ?

Eraſtus. With all my heart, if you think it not too late.

Crito. We have time enough.

He reads :

“ Here then the whole of religion is re-united in
“ one point : that point is truth : ſimple truth is
“ its center : particular truths are its lines and
“ circumference.

“ Particular truths are of two ſorts ; ſome are
“ inſeparable from ſimple truth : others are of a
“ different nature, and may be ſeparated from it.
“ The former depend directly on ſimple truth, as
“ the rays depend on the ſun : the latter are like
“ the objects, which the light ſhews, and therefore
“ of a different nature from light.

“ By this laſt kind of truths I underſtand hiſtori-
“ cal facts, and the circumſtances relating to them ;
“ ſuch as the hiſtories delivered in the Old and New
H 3 Teſtament.

"Testament. I should think the term of true
"would suit these better than that of truth.

"But it will be asked, where lies the difference
"between truth and the true? In this, that the true
"doth not exist of itself; that, properly speaking,
"it has no being existing or subsisting; but is al-
"ways relative to some particular thing, to some
"fact, to some circumstance, or to the connexion
"of things." This explains itself.

Crito speaks.

It is true that By this expression I con-
firm what you have just now laid down. The word
true, pronounced alone, signifies nothing. I am
asked immediately, what is true? Whether it be a
fact, or something said, or the relation between one
circumstance and another. So that it is easy to
conceive that true and truth are not one and the
same thing.

He reads :

"Truth exists of itself: it is the origin of the
"true. There is an infinity of true things; but
"only one truth; I speak of simple and primitive
"truth. Truth ought to be decisive in regard to
"what is true, that is, ought to distinguish it from
"what is false, as the light of the sun enables us to
"distinguish the true from the false, in the objects
"it shews. This is what I understand by particu-
"lar truths, which are of a different nature from
"simple

" simple truth, and to which I think the word true
" would be more suitable than that of truth.

" I now return to those particular truths, which
" I said were inseparable from simple truth, and
" which depend on it as directly as the rays depend
" on the sun. In order to form the better judg-
" ment of the circumference, we must view it
" round from the center.

" Truth in its center, uncreated, simple, univer-
" sal truth, differs in nothing from God himself, as
" I said before. Though God is one and simple,
" his attributes are, or appear to us, many and
" different one from another; as light, which is
" one and simple, seems divided into an infinity of
" rays, which appear distinct one from another.

" Were I a natural philosopher, I would say that
" light seems divided into several rays, only by the
" limits it meets with, and its manner of reflecting
" on the eye. Without determining whether this
" is true or not, in regard to natural or visible light,
" let us return to spiritual or invisible light, of which
" that is no more than the copy; and we may
" safely say, that all is one in God, though his at-
" tributes seem to us different.

" In order to explain this proposition, we must
" consider light two ways; as a cause, and as an
" object. As a cause, it is invariably one; and
" this is what we called simple truth. As an object,
" it appears to our eyes divided into several rays, and

“ this is what we termed particular truths, which
“ depend directly on simple truth.

“ These particular truths, like lines drawn from
“ the center, are all we know of the attributes of
“ divinity : all that can be considered in it separate-
“ ly and distinctly ; as power, wisdom, goodness,
“ justice, and truth. I speak of truth, as an attri-
“ bute or object, not as a cause ; because in that
“ respect, truth is the center where all the attributes
“ meet.

“ The attributes, just now mentioned, are such
“ as are most distinct to our view ; because God
“ has by them manifested himself to intelligent
“ creatures in a more particular manner, than by
“ his most simple attributes ; which are naturally so
“ indivisible, that we can distinguish them from the
“ center of simple truth only as objects.

“ By this kind of attributes, I mean eternity,
“ unity, infinity, immutability, and others of the
“ same nature, which cannot be viewed distinctly,
“ but as the lines in the point where they cease to
“ be such, and become a center.

“ Thus it appears how all religion is re-united
“ in the single point of truth ; and how what we
“ call distinct or particular truths, result from this
“ single point, which is the center.

“ But in what class shall we place the holy scrip-
“ tures ? In that which is proper for them in quality
“ of an evidence of truth. In that quality they will
“ be

" be a lively description of the center, the circumference, and the lines which pass from one to the other. Round the circumference will appear the several histories of men of all times, their different conduct in relation to the center, and what they have done in order to keep at a distance from it, or to approach it.

" This is all that can be required of an evidence, and this is what the scriptures paint to the life. They describe it as spiritual objects can be described; that is, by such expressions as represent invisible objects, in the same manner that material colours represent visible objects.

" But I may be called on to explain what I have advanced; that the scriptures are an evidence, which truth gives of itself without, or indirectly. This is easy; and to keep close to the comparison of a picture, those who drew this, had the original before them: they could not give evidence of the light, but as they themselves were enlightened: they testify only what they have seen and heard. Truth, when it was revealed to them directly, was the cause or principle of their evidence; but the evidence which truth gives of itself, by the organs it chuses, is only indirect in regard to other men. It is an exterior evidence, or a coarse image of truth; an image which can be of no use, but as it refers every one to the

"original, to the direct evidence of simple truth, or
"conscience, which is its echo.

"Is not this sufficient for reveries? At least, it
"is all I can think of at present; and Crito and
"Philo must be satisfied with this, under the pe-
"nalty of making such additions to it as they shall
"think proper."

Crito. Here is a sample of reveries, which might
afford one matter for some time.

Philo. Were we as good revieurs as Erasmus,
this would carry us very far. I must desire him to
tell me his secret.

Erasmus. I believe you have a mind to make me
professor of reveries. I perceive I must hasten my
departure, or you will oblige me to play the forced
physician. You have already extorted much more
from me than was proper. It happens unluckily
for me, that you have pocketed them, so that I
cannot take them back. While they were read-
ing, I could not forgive myself for speaking in a
manner, which so ill becomes a reveur, talking to
philosophers. The worst is, that a reveur cannot
assign a reason for his reveries; he gives them for
what they are, without troubling himself to justify
or defend them.

Philo. The thought of your leaving us is really
shocking. I am now very serious. Do you re-
member, Crito; that, before Erasmus went into the
country, I pretended to be very sorry for his de-
parture?

parture? I own at that time I had a secret pleasure at his going; not only that I might be secure from the reproaches which my conscience frequently made me in our walks; but also stop the rapid progress, which I observed you made with him, and of which I was extremely jealous.

Crito. I found you full of resignation, Philo, at our friend's departure; but did not imagine you quite so easy under the loss. The wise world is very artful. It makes its advantage of every thing: it takes a pride in, at the same time, expressing a concern for a friend, and being courageous enough to bear his absence. This stroke ought to be added to the picture, which Erastus drew of the wise world. But I remember it is there already.

Philo. You dare not go on and tell me it is contained in Erastus's account of hypocrisy, double dealing, and jealousy. Speak out boldly, Crito; be not so apprehensive of offending me; I am not quite so captious now, as I was then.

Crito. We have had Erastus's reveries since that time. They have in a little time made a considerable progress in Philo's mind. They must have some weight with him, to cause so great a change in his language.

Philo. And I am very well pleased with having given occasion to them. I am caught by the very endeavours I made to guard against them. The objections which I started in opposition to the lan-

guage of conscience, or to render it suspected, made me sensible I had one; that its language was not to be despised, and that such a contempt would not always escape with impunity.

The letters, or reveries of Erasmus on conscience, made me sensible of this in a thousand ways. I there found a description of what I felt within myself; the different parts I played in regard to conscience; the art I used for making my advantage of that of other men, and rendering the language of my own useless. But what struck me most, was the close of his third letter. The effect of it was such as I cannot describe; and I perceive it affected me so strongly, only as it sent me more directly to sentiment and experience.

Crito. I find the reveries contained in those letters have a near relation to what we have read to-day; and must explain one another. I shall read them again with pleasure, in order to observe that relation more distinctly.

Philos. I long to do so as much as you, *Crito*; and I fear this will become a subject of dispute between us.

Erasmus. That the dispute may not run so high, and that you may not come to blows for reveries, I believe we shall act prudently in leaving this place immediately.

D I A L O G U E XIV.

CRITO, PHILO, and ERASTUS.

Erastus. **W**ELL, Crito, is the dispute ended at last?

Crito. Yes, Erastus, and without effusion of blood. I hope Philo and I shall quarrel no more, unless you set us together by the ears again with some new reveries. If that happens, we shall not be displeased with our quarrels on those terms.

Erastus. I am a peaceable man, Crito; it shall not be said that I sow discord among friends. Besides, I am one of those fantastical reveurs, who do not produce their reveries as they are bespoke. But now we are talking of reveurs, here is a man* who is in a fair way of being one in good earnest. Dear Philo, where are you? A hundred leagues from this place, I am certain.

Philo. I was in your reveries, Erastus; and methinks it was not kind in you to awake me out of them.

Erastus. If I may be so inquisitive, pray in which of them was you?

Philo. In that we read last. I take that to be the key to all the rest, and think it may help us to

• Looking on Philo.

solve

solve all the difficulties in religion, which have hitherto seemed most considerable. I had some of several sorts, which I intended to propose to you; but as I was perusing those reveries last night, I found most of them answered.

Crito. I have sufficient reason in my turn to be jealous of the progress Philo makes every day in the art of reveries. I own he exceeds me in that point.

Philo. How do you know that, Crito? You judge by appearances then; because you have observed me wear the air or mien of a reveur, you immediately conclude me an adept in the art like Erasmus. At that rate, how many heavy, melancholy, stupid blockheads might pass for adepts, while they are silent. I beg you would not confound our friend with persons so different from him in reality, though they may in some measure resemble him in form; I speak of the time when he is actually engaged in his reveries.

Erasmus. Let us have done with the reality and the form, so far as they may relate to Erasmus; and let us own they are extremely different when considered in themselves. From the universal blindness of men in that regard, proceed their erroneous judgments, both in the common course of life, and in what concerns religion.

Crito. It is true, the character of an honest man and a Christian is now-a-days settled by form
and

and appearances. Is any thing farther necessary for establishing his reputation? Great numbers sit down contented with these; and as the case stands, I know not whether, if the choice was proposed, to have the reputation of a good man, without being so, or to be a good man, without the reputation of such; I know not, I say, whether many would chuse the latter.

Philo. Now you speak of being a good man, I remember the definition Erastus gave us the first time we saw him. He told us, in short, that a good man, and a man devoted to God were the same. I could not object against this definition; but I reduced this idea of being devoted to the divinity to a small point. I thought no principle of religion more reasonable, more incontestable, or more universally received than this; and yet I know not whether any thing is less known than the reality of this devotion, or more strongly opposed by men, though without their own knowledge.

Erastus. That is precisely the main and essential part of a Christian's, or good man's character, which few give themselves any concern to acquire. The form and appearances are put on with less trouble, and do a man as much, perhaps more, nay, infinitely more honour.

What can be the reason of that? It is because the reality of this devotion requires that a man should not himself chuse the form or appearances; but

but that he be ready or disposed to receive the different forms, according to the will of the master, to whom he is devoted. This is supposed in the forms of prayer used in public. What protestations do we not there make of being devoted without reserve? Thy will shall be the rule of our conduct, and thy glory the end of all our actions.

Ask some one of the congregation, whether he conceives the nature of this engagement, he will tell you, it consists in consecrating to God our mind and our body, as a living sacrifice, and without reserve, every thing that is in us, and depends on us, to be employed in his service.*

But have you any idea of this sacrifice without reserve? Do you understand what it is to propose the glory of God as your end? Are you acquainted with this rule, by which you protest you design to regulate your conduct? Here a man would be puzzled; not only one of the most ignorant sort, but perhaps one of those who pass for the most devout and knowing.

If we have not so much as the idea of it, what will become of the reality? The consequence will be, that it will not be distinguished, and consequently will be opposed wherever it is; and thus what we were saying concerning the extreme distance be-

* Other expressions taken from the same form of prayer.

sweeten

tween the substance, and the form, reality, and appearances, will be made good.

Philo. Had you asked me the same question some weeks ago, Erastus, I should have been pretty much at a loss for an answer. I believe, that, to get rid of you, I should have asked you in my turn, whether those prayers were not noble, and fit for raising the soul? For so I have heard them defined by several.

Erastus. And I perhaps, in my turn, should have asked you, Whether expressions ought not to be the images of thoughts and sentiments? You would certainly have granted it. On that foot, I should likewise have granted, that the words I have quoted from the forms in question, are beautiful images of what makes the reality in a person devoted to God. I should then have left you to judge, whether this original is every where to be found, and whether the image can be fit for raising the original, or is only fit for representing it?

Crito. It has been thought a bold charge to reproach men with contenting themselves with beautiful ideas concerning religion; but in this particular, they are satisfied with less. They amuse themselves with fine words: insensibly take them for the reality; and make a great noise with the terms consecration, living sacrifice, being absolutely devoted, &c. Have they any idea of what is meant by them? I own it is not long since I
have

have conceived any ; and believe, had I been attacked on that subject, I should have been obliged to define them by some synonymous words ; the common shift of such as know things more by expressions than by ideas.

Erastus. At that rate, how far are men from being able to distinguish truth exactly ! And are we to be surprized, if they substitute appearances in the room of reality, of which they have not even the idea ? Of what, for example, have men less the idea, than of the reality of those words lately quoted : To make the will of God the rule of our conduct, and his glory the end of all our actions ? What is the glory of God ? and what is meant by proposing it as the end of all our actions ? It is an engagement ; and one would think men ought to have some idea of what they engage to perform. I could wish that those, who renew this engagement every day by a repetition of the words, would explain themselves on the idea they fix to them.

Philo. That would be requiring too much, *Erastus.* I know some people, who, to embarrass you in their turn, would ask you whether you disapprove of the daily repetition of those fine words.

Erastus. My answer to that question would be soon ready. I would tell them, that such as have in themselves the reality of what those words express, may repeat them as often as they please, without danger of injuring truth and sincerity : that,

as for those who are guilty of falshood in the repetition, it is their business to judge in what rank they place themselves, and what hazard they run. This would be my whole reply: their conscience, if listened to, would explain the matter farther.

Crito. But, dear *Eraustus*, were you asked what idea you yourself entertain of this engagement, what answer would you give?

Eraustus. I would say, *Crito*, that the glory of God is a subject so far above my capacity, that I dare not attempt a definition of it. I say the same of the disposition, by which a man proposes that glory is the end of all his actions; that disposition which I admire, and which must necessarily be the result of the most refined love, is so widely different from the disposition of a beginner like me, that I can form no distinct and clear idea of it. Do not pretend to dispute the appellation of a beginner with me; I confess myself such, in all respects; and much more so in regard to these sublime dispositions.

As to the will of God, and the disposition by which a man chuses it for the rule of his conduct, I can speak of them only from what I have learnt by a beginning of experience. I will say therefore, that men can know the will of God only by the light of truth, or by the testimony of truth.

Truth bears witness for itself, in two manners, as a cause, and as an object, directly and indirectly:

directly

directly within, by each man's conscience: indirectly without, by the organs, which it has inspired or directed in their writings; and this is what we call the holy scripture. As a cause and simple, truth acts immediately on the conscience, it is felt before it is perceived: as an object, it is perceived much more by its effects than in itself. The light of the sun is an emblem of it; it acts on the senses as a cause, before it becomes the object of perception. Even when it is perceived as an object, it is of so simple a nature, that we distinguish nothing particular in it, unless it be by the objects it discovers, and the reverberation from bodies on which it is reflected.

I return to truth, which is light, as St. John calls it; and I say, that if its first office is to act on the sentiment or on conscience; the first duty of the creature in respect to it is to consent to receive its impressions, to open his eyes in order to perceive the objects it discovers, and the path it points out. Here consent comes into play; so that by a determinate yes or no, a man may open the door to, or shut it against the light. Here, in a word, the integrity of the will decides, and becomes in man the key of knowledge, the introduction to truth.

It is matter of fact that the light of the sun neither is perceived, nor gives us the perception of any object, if we shut our eyes, with a design of not seeing.

seeing. Nothing depends more on man's free will than the opening or shutting his eyes, and turning his sight from certain objects, in order to fix it on others.

Nor is it less certain that truth can make no progress in man, but in proportion to his consent to give it entrance, and that he gives it entrance only by obeying it.

In proportion as truth is obeyed, it more distinctly shews the road we are to take; it serves as a guide in that road; interiorly by sentiment, or the simple language of conscience: exteriorly it shews the same way painted to the life, in the outward testimony it bears of itself. I speak of the holy scripture. This scripture declares we can know the truth, or the will of God, only as far as we are determined to obey it without reserve; that those, who are of God, hear the words of God, because they have the testimony of God within them.

Thus truth is the soul and center of religion. Thus it is the rule which rectifies all things, without being capable of correction, the light which manifests all things, and without which we cannot see whither we are going. I speak here of simple, universal, uncreated truth, the source of all truth, which has existed in God from eternity, and which is called in scripture, sometimes wisdom, sometimes the word, sometimes the light, and sometimes life.

It

It is this truth, I say, which the scripture testifies to be the light and the life. To this light it refers men for information, and direction in discerning truth. Such as make a proper use of this exterior testimony which truth bears of itself, and give room within themselves for the direct and simple testimony of truth, without reserve, really devote themselves to God, offer themselves to him as a living and holy sacrifice, without reserve, and take his will for the rule of their conduct, being guided by truth itself.

These have within themselves the reality of those words, which all profess to admire as beautiful, and which are so to him who pronounces them, only as far as they are the image of his disposition. Is it necessary now to ask, who is fit to repeat them? It is every one's business to enquire what truth and sincerity may allow him to do.

Philo. You have, before you was aware, answered several of the difficulties I designed to propose to you, Eraſtus.

I should have asked you, for example, how truth can act on the sentiment? I find myself answered by the comparison of light, which is felt without being perceived, and by your adding, that truth acts on the sentiment, as a cause, as something living and operating.

I should likewise have asked, whether conscience is, properly speaking, simple and primitive truth?

I find

I find an answer to this question in your saying that conscience is a direct testimony of simple truth, a voice or language in which it expresses itself; that conscience, in short, is the echo of truth.

I find from what you have advanced, in what sense you before said that its language is infallibly that of truth; that it is invariably the same, the rule by which all things ought to be rectified, without being capable of correction itself, the light which cannot be enlightened, but which ought to be allowed to enlighten us, by removing the obstacles which oppose it.

Thus I find the whole of religion really reunited in the single point of truth: that truth being one, leads such as admit its testimony interiorly, to admit the testimony it gives of itself exteriorly in the language of the scripture, as the scripture constantly refers us to that of conscience.

I find that these two testimonies, having one and the same truth for their principle, agree perfectly well, and mutually assist each other. Methinks the distinction of truth, and what is true, might take place here: that conscience, as the echo of truth, ought infallibly to lead to the discernment of what is true, in the language of the scripture; and that it ought to be the business of what is true to reduce all things to truth as its origin.

Crito.

Crito. As you go on, Philo, Erasmus was not much in the wrong when he said * the lawyers go through with whatever they undertake. You have made so exact a reduction of several truths to one point, that Erasmus would find it a hard matter to explain things better.

Erasmus. I should have been very much puzzled how to do it in so few words.

Philo. I have not done yet; and you shall see I am going to act like Æsop's raven; in order to make you admire my fine voice, I will communicate the sequel of my reveries on those of Erasmus.

Crito. You will be very much surprized, Philo, when I tell you we are not in the humour of hearing your fine voice to-day. I believe it is time to be gone; but we shall lose nothing by the matter; we will reserve the sequel of the song till to-morrow. What say you, Erasmus?

Erasmus. I think it a good thought, Crito; and the more so, because if Philo's voice should chance to prove of an enchanting nature, like that of the Sirens, we should be in danger of staying here all night.

Philo. If you at first began to spoil me by your applause, you soon repair the damage by making me put up my compliment, without asking my consent. However, I must take the honour of it to myself, and thank you for this friendly office.

* Dialogue I.

D I A-

D I A L O G U E XV.

CRITO, PHILO, and ERASTUS.

Erastus. **D**EAR Philo, we are now ready to hear your fine voice.

Crito. Mr Raven may begin when he pleases.

Philo. You interrupted me yesterday, Crito, in the middle of my period; and have made me so effectually forget my compliment, that I cannot possibly recollect it.

Crito. In the mean time, till you can recover it, I must tell you what happened to me yesterday.

I had left Erastus's three letters, or reveries, concerning conscience, on my table. Young Fortunatus, of whom I was speaking the other day, laid his hands on them. He had no sooner cast his eye on the first page, but he expressed a great desire of reading them; and was so pressing in his demands, that I could not refuse him.

That instant I was called away, and left him alone in my chamber near half an hour. In that interval, a lady, who was in the next room, went into mine, and found Fortunatus employed in reading. She insisted on knowing what he was reading: he made a secret of it; which increased her curiosity. She imagined they were letters of galantry,

lantry, suspected certain persons of being in the intrigue, shrugged up her shoulders at their want of conduct, and, not being able to obtain a sight of them, returned to the room from whence she came, where she found a company of ladies, to whom she communicated her conjectures. You may imagine they built castles in the air, and each of them made some new discovery in the mystery.

During these transactions, I returned to my room, where Fortunatus told me what had passed. But by way of parenthesis, I must give you the character of the lady in question. She is a person pretty well advanced in years, with a gravity suitable to her age, prudent and wise, and devout to a degree. She has a genius for reading, can reason on all subjects, not excepting divinity; if you have any acquaintance with Urania, you will know her by this description.

Erastus. I know her only by name. This is what they call a lady of universal merit.

Crito. I should now give you an account of the other ladies in the company; but that would take up too much of our time. You are only to know they were of different ages and characters. Some grave, some merry, and others a mixture of both.

They found some pretence for calling me aside, with a view of getting the secret out of me: I diverted myself a good while with hearing their conjectures; at last I yielded, and gave consent that

Fortunatus

Fortunatus should deliver them the letters in question. He offered to read them to the company: Urania disputed the point with him; being apprehensive he would not give them entire. Fortunatus gave up the contest: Urania ran over three or four pages, and expressed her surprize. All the ladies fixed their eyes on her, and were desirous of knowing the cause of her surprize. It is, says she, because I do not understand this way of writing: one does not know whether it is serious or jocular. Several very different subjects are mentioned; such as conscience, truth, musicians, concerts, magicians, astrologers, a prince in his minority, a regent, vexation, anger, reveries, &c. Reconcile all this, if you please. These letters, said I, must be penned by some reveur; you will be able to judge of the matter, if you will give yourself the trouble of reading them. Urania began, and continued to the end without interruption. It was very entertaining to see the different looks of the ladies. Some shrugged up their shoulders: some seemed tired; some expressed their surprize; and others were in a brown study. But the best diversion was to hear them talk after the letters were read.

Erasmus. You should have taken down their remarks in writing, Crito.

Crito. I did so; but took particular care not to be observed; the discovery would have made them quit the place immediately. I told them I would

leave them, to allow them more freedom of discourse. I then returned into my closet, which you know is contiguous to the room where the ladies were; and, as the partition is very thin, I lost not one word of the conversation. At first I had some difficulty to understand them; for they spoke all together, and it was impossible to write any thing. It happened luckily for me, that one of the ladies made a proposal of speaking one after another, as the English do. The proposal was accepted; and, what was more surprizing, regularly observed. You shall see the parts that each of them acted on that occasion.

(Crito takes a paper out of his pocket, and delivers it to Erastus.)

Erastus reads.

URANIA, SALOME, CLEOPATRA. Three ladies almost of the same class.

CLARIETTA, CECILIA, FAUVETA. Of the class of wags.

NEREA, EVODIA, SYNTICHE. Of the mixed class.

FORTUNATUS. The only man.

Urania. "Ladies, what think you of this way of writing?"

Salome.

Salome. "I own I think it very extraordinary.
"It cannot be denied but here are some good
"things, such as are said, for example, concerning
"truth and conscience. But, after all, who dis-
"putes it with the writer? Who doubts that the
"language of conscience is that of truth? Me-
"thinks there is no necessity of undertaking to
"prove what is so evident.

Cleopatra. "Certainly; and things are render-
"ed more dubious by too nice enquiries into them.
"I am for keeping the high-beaten road, as our fore-
"fathers did; people in our age imagine them-
"selves wiser than they. For my part, I suspect
"every thing that favours of novelty. I stick fast
"to the old rock; that is always the safest way; is
"it not?

Urania. "No doubt: though we are not to
"reject, without examination, every thing that has
"some appearance of novelty. I stand by the maxim
"of trying all things, and holding fast what is
"good. What shocks me in these letters, is the
"mixture of banter and serious discourse; nothing
"seems to me worse put together. The author
"shews by that his want of judgment.

Salome. "I was just going to make the same
"remark. Every thing ought to be in its proper
"place. Not that I am an enemy to mirth and
"gaiety. I am particularly pleased to see them in
"young people; but when the discourse turns on
"religion

“ religion or truth, it is another affair. On such
“ occasions one ought to be grave and serious.
“ What think you, ladies ?

Cleopatra. “ I am entirely of your mind ; there
“ is a time for all things ; a time to discharge the
“ duties of religion, by the publick and private
“ exercises it prescribes, and a time to be merry
“ and divert one’s self.

Urania. “ The worst is, that young people are
“ so fond of being merry, that they cannot, with-
“ out the utmost difficulty, pass from gaiety to the
“ gravity, which the exercises of religion require.

Cleopatra. “ That is so true, that I have no
“ small difficulty to prevail with ours to acquit
“ themselves of those, which are the most indis-
“ pensable. This is the humour of young people ;
“ every thing that favours of devotion or serious-
“ ness, lays them under constraint ; and I am of
“ opinion that, if some care was not taken in that
“ point, they would have no religion at all.

Urania. “ I am of your opinion ; and it is what
“ gives me much trouble. But now you speak of
“ young people, let us make these young ladies talk
“ a little, that we may know their sentiments on
“ what we have read. Take notice how they form
“ themselves into a separate company with Fortu-
“ natus. They are afraid of being put on the
“ serious strain one moment. Are you not, young
“ ladies ?

Clarietta.

Clarietta. "On the serious strain! we are deeply engaged that way; and are making our remarks on the letters.

Urania. "Be pleased to communicate them to us.

Clarietta. "I was saying that, to speak freely, I should be more capable of judging whether a head is well dressed or not, than of distinguishing what is most valuable in these letters. But, after all, the style of this reveur hits my taste pretty well; and if all serious discourses were written in this manner, they would be read with some pleasure.

Fauveta. "I ingenuously confessed, that on seeing the bare title of such letters, and that of some little songs, I should have given the preference to the latter. After such a declaration, who would have imagined that I could have attended so long without being tired one moment. And I doubt whether these letters have not had certain charms for me, which I never found in any song.

Cecilia. "For my part, I own that, had I not thought them letters of gallantry, I should have left the room before the reading begun. When I understood what was the subject of them, I was seized with curiosity: I was desirous of knowing what followed; and found a certain *Je ne sçai quoi*, which would not allow me to go.

Urania, to the three other ladies. "May we
 "not know what you philosophical ladies think of
 "them?"

Syntiche. "Pray, madam, how long has that
 "fine title been my due? Have I deserved it for
 "my skill in spinning? I leave it to Evodia, and
 "Nerea, as their right. They, who have studied
 "logic, may justly be called by that name.

Nerea. "I neither pretend to be a logician nor
 "a philosopher; however, a little logic never does
 "any harm. It may be useful in enabling one to
 "distinguish, in what one reads, truth from falsehood,
 "the matter from the form, and the substance from
 "the accidents.

Saleme. "See how learned she is; it is a plea-
 "sure to hear her talk. I take her to be one of
 "those who are best able to form a sound judgment
 "of the letters in question.

Urania. "Perhaps she is. Some persons with
 "their good sense alone, have as much judgment as
 "others with all their logic. But you have not yet
 "given your opinion, Evodia. You have, how-
 "ever, a double right to do it, both as a logician,
 "and a person of wit.

Evodia. "I freely acknowledge, I would willing-
 "ly give all my logic for the least of these reveries, or
 "for the secret of thinking in this manner. Logic
 "never made me feel a certain *Je ne sçai quoi*,
 "which these reveries have awakened in me. And
 "that

"that *Je ne ſçai quoi*, being once awakened, has
"ſaid more to me than the reveries themſelves.

Nerea. "Without valuing logic too much, I
"place it at its due value. The little knowledge
"I have of that art has enabled me to obſerve ſeve-
"ral faults in the letters in queſtion. There are
"ſuch inſtances of falſe conſtruction, which would
"induce one to think the author never ſtudied
"grammar. The tenſes are frequently confound-
"ed: the verb with the adverb; and genitive caſe
"with the ablative.

Clarietta. "We have a right to enter an action
"againſt him.

Fortunatus. "In reality, to pretend to write
"reveries, without being a grammarian, is not
"allowable.

Evodia. "So, Mr. Fortunatus; ſhall it be ſaid
"that you remain behind the curtain, without ex-
"plaining yourſelf? You ſhall not come off with-
"out telling us your opinion.

Fortunatus. "What opinion can you expect
"from a libertine, like me, in matters where reli-
"gion is concerned? It is well enough known that
"I have hitherto had no great acquaintance with
"it; judge then whether I ſhould be a proper per-
"ſon for the taſk you impoſe on me. All I can
"ſee of the reveries in queſtion is, that I have read
"them with ſome pleaſure, and heard them read
"with more. I did not indeed obſerve whether the
"author

“author was a logician, or a grammarian; but in
 “quality of a reveur, I think he has not perform-
 “ed ill; and believe that his reveries would go far-
 “ther toward reconciling me to religion, than the
 “most eloquent discourses.”

Crito. Here Fortunatus looked on his watch, and told the ladies it was past eight: the whole company decamped, and thus ended the scene.

Philo. Could you have expected, Erastus, to find here, at once, the diversion of a walk, and that of a comedy?

Erastus. I did not expect to be so well entertained. You see, after all, that the reveries are good for something, were it only to make the ladies talk.

Crito. And give them an opportunity of shewing their wit and judgment. I was ready to break out into laughter, particularly when the young lady talked of logic and grammar. You shall see our logician will make fine comments on the reveries. She desired to take a copy, in order to shew them, as she said, to better judges. No doubt she means some gentleman, who is both an able grammarian and logician. The poor reveries will be prettily deciphered.

Erastus. A great honour truly for a logician to amuse himself with deciphering reveries, and quarrel with a reveur. This would be but barely pardonable

donable in a lady, who professes that art. It is remarkable that your ladies attacked only the form and the terms, without excepting against the things.

Crito. I had a strong inclination to lay down my pen, and answer them; especially when I heard it gravely decided, that gaiety and religion are two distinct articles: that every thing ought to be in its proper place, &c.

Eraſtus. This confirms what we were saying some time ago; that the idea of something gloomy and sour was in the minds of several, annexed to the idea of religion: that hence young people conceive such a dislike to it; and acquit themselves of those duties, which they think most indispensable, only with constraint. It is diverting to hear it said that, if great care was not taken of them in this point, they would have no religion at all. Have they a greater share of it, when they act the grimace of it?

Crito. There are men in the world, who would answer, that this is something, however.

Philo. Would a man be satisfied with such a reply?

Eraſtus. Every one pretends to hate grimace. A man cannot bear that another should practise it on him, while at the same time, he practises it on himself; and is satisfied with himself on those terms.

Crito. This is what I, some time ago, called a want of honesty in regard to ourselves, and what our friend Philo did not comprehend.

Philo. Rather say, I would not comprehend it. I pretended ignorance, while at the bottom I perceived well enough it was my own case. What you said gave me much torture, by referring me to my conscience, which in its turn spoke much more to me on that subject.

Crito. You see Erastus's reveries occasioned somewhat like this in one of our ladies, as much a logician as she is.

Erastus. Your two logicians seem of very different characters; which proves that things produce good or bad effects in men, only according to the good or bad use made of them.

Philo. Hence it may be concluded that the disposition of the heart renders exterior things good or bad; not that exterior things render the heart good or bad.

Erastus. That is a grand principle, confirmed by the gospel, and which extends much farther than to the use of food. Men know how to make an advantage of it in what is agreeable to themselves; but are unacquainted with both the substance and essence of it.

Crito. You make me remember, Erastus, that to justify my own inclinations, I have frequently made use of these words: To the pure all things are pure. It remained only to know whether that was my case; whether my heart was really pure.

This

This I chose rather to suppose, than examine to the bottom.

Erastus. You are not the only person, Crito, to whom this has happened. The same illusion has often led me into mistakes. I have since imagined myself like a sick man, who, to follow his own whims, should justify himself with this maxim: To the healthy all things are wholesome.

Crito. The maxim is very true; but the application of it is not always just.

Erastus. Men proceed exactly in the same manner with regard to religion. They take out of the gospel some maxims, true in themselves; but which cease to be so in respect to them, by the bad application they make of them.

Crito. By this means they have the art of changing truth into falsehood. Is not this what the scripture calls changing what is right into wormwood? *Amos.*

Erastus. I know not whether the false, that reigns universally among men, is not more pernicious to them than the most disorderly inclinations of corrupt nature. It is by the false that those inclinations are disguised and entertained, and even rendered such as not to be known. Were this not the case, they would inspire a horror, and find but little refuge.

Philo.

Philo. I know some, who being themselves under the dominion of the false, would ask you what you mean by that term.

Erastus. The false, as it manifests itself without, is, properly speaking, the art of disguising. How many mysteries doth this art cover, both in civil society and religious affairs! This art may be called the universal key, or the *Passe-par-tout*, proper for letting every one into his own pretensions.

In order to know what the false is in the world, we need only, for a moment, imagine the metamorphosis we should see, were the art of disguising banished from among men; were all hearts to be laid open, and every one was obliged to think aloud. Thus we should be able to judge whether this art doth not serve as a mask, or covering to all that is hideous and shocking; and whether being employed for hiding evil, it doth not, at the same time, afford it protection and nourishment.

Philo. This is a good demonstration of the maxim you just now advanced; since the false is a pernicious evil, not only in itself, but as it serves to support all sorts of evils by the beautiful appearance it gives them. So much for the false, as it manifests itself without; but what is it in its origin?

Erastus.

Erastus. Was you to ask me, Philo, what is darkness, I should answer, that it is caused only by the absence of light.

I might likewise reply, that the false is produced by the absence of truth. All the difference here is, that, properly speaking, darkness is nothing ; whereas the false is something. Bare darkness is much less opposite to light, than the false is to truth. If darkness gives us the sight of no objects, it doth not disguise them ; whereas the false is a deceitful glimmering, that disguises all it shews.

Bare darkness makes no opposition to light ; it gives place to it when it appears. The false opposes truth, as the light of a candle produces a false light at noon. This comparison is not sufficient for characterizing the false ; and here it ought to be remembered that all comparisons are lame.

Crito. I think I perceive the defect of this. The light of the sun eclipses the false light of the candle much more, than the candle can eclipse the light of the sun ; whereas the false oftner makes truth disappear, than truth does the false.

Erastus. Dear Crito, you do not fully comprehend my meaning. If in one sense it is true, that the false has a greater power to eclipse truth, than truth has to eclipse the false ; we are to seek for the cause of this difference, not in truth itself, but in the obstacles which men place in its way.

Truth

Truth in itself would not have less power to obscure the false, than the light of the sun has to eclipse that of a candle, did not men voluntarily shut up the avenues, in order to substitute the false in its place; as it is in their power to shut up the avenues against the light of the sun, in order to substitute a borrowed light in its room.

Let us say that, properly speaking, truth in itself cannot be eclipsed by the false, as the light of the sun cannot be eclipsed by that of a lamp. But, as the light of a lamp, though it does not eclipse the sun, eclipses the light which it diffuses on objects; and in that respect it may be said that the false light eclipses the true; it may be likewise said, that the false, though it doth not eclipse truth, eclipses the light which it diffuses on objects, and that that light is nothing but the true, as we have distinguished it from truth.

Hence it is easy to conclude, that the false is properly the opposite of the true: that, as it is the property of the true to shew objects such as they are, without embellishing them; it is the property of the false to shew them for what they are not, to disguise some by making them appear beautiful, and others by making them look ugly.

Philo. I might say, I have all my life-time been under the dominion of the false, without perceiving it; and, though I have no idea of, I but now begin to discern it. I, however, imagined myself

myself very capable of distinguishing the true from the false. I even fancied I hated the false above all things; because I hated some of its effects in other men. Disguise, for example, appeared horrible to me, when I saw it worn by others; but I imagined myself free from it, because I avoided what was most gross, while I made use of what was more refined. I should perhaps speak more correctly, if I said that my own disguise was imperceptible, only because it was become as natural to me as breathing.

Crito. This may be called defining things exactly. I am almost jealous of you, Philo, for explaining the matter so justly. But, not to leave you the whole honour, I add to your definition, that the art of disguising appears no longer an art in those in whom the false reigns; so natural is this art become to them: that this art is expressed much less by the words they speak, than by the face they put on, by their eyes, their gesture, and the whole of their behaviour. As the idea of disguise is confined to saying, on purpose in a gross manner, the contrary of what we think, it is easy to flatter ourselves on that article. We have now, Erastus, considered the false in its effects. It would be material

Erastus. I understand you, Crito; you would likewise consider the false in its origin. This is not

not so easy; it is much less difficult to discover the origin of the true than that of the false.

The origin of the true is truth, which has ever existed in God. Consequently, the origin of the true is eternal; and as it had no beginning, so it will have no end.

This is not the case in regard to the false. We certainly know, there was a time when it did not exist: it could not exist, when God was the only being; when pure and simple truth was all, and alone. Where could the false find room then?

The false therefore has had a beginning, and must have been posterior to the existence of creatures, as being always relative to some particular being; so that had there been no particular being, there would have been no false.

Crito. I remember you said the same of the true or particular truths; that if there had been no creatures, or particular being, there would have been no particular truths. How is it possible that the two opposites should result from the existence of the same creatures?

I have another difficulty. If the origin of the true is eternal, it cannot, in all respects, be the opposite of the false, which had a beginning.

Erastus. Though the origin of the true is eternal, it doth not thence follow, that it had no beginning. The true may be considered in two respects;

spects; as relative at the same time both to primitive truth, and to the creatures.

In the first respect, we may grant it had no beginning: in the last, it is evident it is only the consequence of their existence; and in this point the true and the false are precisely the two opposites, or contraries.

In order to discover now how it is possible that the two contraries should result from the existence of the same creatures, we should know the nature of those creatures; an enquiry that doth not belong to a reveur. All he can say of it, in that character, is, that if the two opposites, the true and the false, have been produced by some creature, it must have been endowed with freedom and understanding.

Understanding, in order to be susceptible of the impressions of truth: freedom, that it might receive or not receive it at pleasure. Truth once received produces true: truth being rejected, the false takes its place. Hence it is easy to conclude, that the true and the false must have been occasioned by the free will of an intelligent being, according to the choice it was pleased to make.

Crito. Some would here ask you, what that intelligent being is; whether an angel or a man.

Erastus. I should say; it must certainly be he who deviated from his original uprightness: if the querist admitted the testimony of scripture, he would
not

not suppose it an angel. I know it is not fashionable to take the Mosaical account of the temptation too literally; but, without disputing on the letter, we might observe the design of that historian; the tendency of which is to shew us the false, at that time set in opposition to the true, and man placed between them to determine his choice of one or the other by his own free will. The event gives us to understand that he chose the false; or rather was deceived by taking the false for the true.

Is there any necessity for going so far back, to find the reality of this history? Might it not be called, as to the substance, the history of all ages. Let men dispute as long as they please concerning the fact and the circumstances of that event; is it not sufficient, that what passes in our days, is a repetition, or a speaking picture of it?

Is it not incontestable, that man is still placed between the true and the false; and doth not the event every day prove that his strongest inclinations draw him to the latter; and that his will carries him to it?

However, he never determines on the false, as such; but as it wears the appearance of the true, or as he gives it the colour of the true.

Philo. Erasmus has painted us several things with one single stroke. This point of view might be sufficient for unravelling innumerable difficulties.

Erasmus.

Erasmus. What we have said of the false, as it shews itself without by disguise, is no more than a consequence of the false, which man has allowed free entrance into himself. But whence comes it that he gives so great a preference to the false, since he is so fond of the image and appearance of the true? It is because the image or appearance amuses him agreeably, without producing any real reformation in him; even without letting him see such a reformation is necessary.

Whereas the reality of the true, or simple truth, which is its origin, endeavours this reformation in man, by acting first on the sentiment or conscience.

This sentiment is painful, as it undeceives man of the favourable opinion he had entertained of himself, and attacks him in the tenderest part, where he cannot suffer any thing should make an attempt on him. I speak here of the opinion of a pretended uprightness or honesty, of which this sentiment disabuses him; and of which he is not willing to be disabused.

Philo. I find proofs within myself of all *Erasmus* has been saying. And I remember, by the acknowledgments which *Crito* has more than once made, that his case must be the same with mine.

Crito. Exactly; I longed to tell you so, *Philo*; but you would not hear me.

Philo.

Philo. I heard you often enough, Crito, in spite of myself; but in reality, I was not willing to hear you. I thereby see the truth of what Erasmus has often told us; that every thing in man must begin with the will: that, according to the determination of that faculty for the true or the false, it may conduct man to what is most divine, or most diabolical.

Erastus. From which let us conclude, that in regard to every man in particular, the will is the origin of the true or the false; as it allows the one or the other free entrance. But I believe we forget ourselves, and that it is later than we imagine.

Philo. I cannot prevail with myself to quit either Erasmus or the walk. Shall we make a bargain for accommodating the whole matter? Come and sup with me, and after that we will return, and indulge our reveries here by star-light.

Erastus. I take you at your word, Philo; and am persuaded Crito will join me.

Crito. I know my own interest too well to refuse the proposal; and Philo would have been caught, had he not invited me in good earnest.

DIALOGUE XVI.

CRITO, PHILO, and ERASTUS.

Walking after Supper.

Philo. I Know not, Erastus, whether your taste agrees with mine or not; but methinks this is the best time for walking.

Erastus. At least it is most proper for reveries; every thing seems to invite to them, even the croaking of the frogs, not to mention the murmuring brooks. But the business of reveries excepted, it must be owned that the view of the day is quite another thing: it has somewhat gay and lovely, to which all animals give a welcome. I speak of such as appear in the day, and particularly of birds; among which, man ought always to be placed in the first rank.

Crito. I understand you, Erastus; you mean that man ought to be, in all senses, a day-bird.

Erastus. Right; and I add, that if man loves the day, it is rather that which he shares with those little animals, than the day which is proper to him in the quality of man. In that respect he avoids the light; and may be called a night-bird. Not that he was formed for that character, but because he has made a free choice of it.

Philo.

Philo. Perhaps those, who have the greatest aversion to the light, are such as imagine themselves most enlightened, and most capable of an exact discernment of objects.

Eraustus. Most certainly, *Philo.* This comes not from their being in absolute ignorance, which being nothing, may perhaps be compared to mere darkness; but from their being enlightened with a false or borrowed light, to which they give the name of truth, and which satisfies them so far, as to leave them nothing to desire or see beyond it.

Crito. I am thinking of what you lately said, *Eraustus*, that the will is in every man the origin of the true and the false. I imagine it might be objected, that the discernment of the true and the false belongs to the understanding, rather than to the will; and that it is the business of the eye to discern objects, before the will makes its choice.

Eraustus. It is, I own, the business of the eye to discern objects; but can the eye open and fix on such or such an object, without the consent of the will, even when the light actually shines? The will, as the sovereign faculty in man, has it always its power to avoid it, more or less. It uses innumerable shifts to screen itself from the light more or less.

Philo. I never observed, *Eraustus*, the power which the will has over the whole man, and even over the understanding, which seems independent
of

of it. I understand the case here is the same as in regard to the eye, which is commanded by the will to open or shut, partly or entirely, to look on one side of certain objects, when it is not willing to see them entirely, and

Erastus. Here the winking with the eye, mentioned in the gospel, takes place. In proportion as the eye opens and shuts on a sudden, it sees and does not see ; or rather it has so imperfect a glimpse of all things, that it takes them rather for what they are not, than for what they are.

Judge now what weight is to be allowed to the judgment that may hence be formed ; and whether by this way of seeing, it be possible to set a right value on things.

Crito. This principle of the will's power over the understanding is, perhaps, one of the most incontestable, and, at the same time, the least known.

Erastus. The false, that reigns in the world, may be considered either as speculative, or practical. The will is the origin of both.

Crito. I could never have comprehended how the speculative false, or the false in point of opinion, could proceed from the will, without the principle established by Erastus. I now find it easy to explain ; and am much mistaken if another objection, which several will, no doubt, start against the letters on conscience, is not as easily solved by the same principle.

K

Erastus.

Erastus. Perhaps, I guess at that objection. It is about placing conscience above reasoning.

Crito. It is so, *Erastus*. I thought you would be charged with abolishing all use of reasoning, or of right reason; for you know one is confounded with the other.

Erastus. There certainly is a wide difference between reasoning and right reason. For want of being acquainted with this distinction, men have fought with their own shadows, and multiplied disputes about words without end.

Crito. Not to mention the differences among divines on this article, you know the mystics are accused of forbidding all use of reason, and representing it as a very pernicious thing.

Erastus. The mystics, or rather the apprentices in that system, who have undertaken to ape the true mystics, have, perhaps, spoken against reason, and sheltered themselves under their authority, without understanding their doctrine. It is diverting to observe how these men blunder and dash one against another. A word, which they look on as sacred, cannot be attacked, but they immediately take fire, and are resolved to defend it to the last. Another word, which they consider as out-lawed, because it has been banished by some one of their saints, puts them out of all patience; they can bear it no more, than if it came out of the bottomless pit.

By

By accustoming themselves to quarrel about words, men come to substitute them in the place of the ideas of things. With many people, words are like what bank bills once were in France. Men were content to be paid with paper, and paid others in the same manner. There is some reason to believe the credit of words will fall as much as that of paper, among those who love reality.

Crito. The comparison is pleasant. But then it should not be forgot, that every one loves reality in gold and silver; but very few give themselves any concern for the reality of truth. In this respect, men are not displeased at being paid with words; whereas it was force only that established the credit of paper.

Philo. Since words, destitute of ideas, are not to pass current among us, Erastus, you are to give us an idea of the difference which you make between reasoning and right reason.

Erastus. Before we shew the difference between two things, we ought to form a distinct idea of each. I have a right, therefore, Philo, to ask you what you understand by right reason; for as the ideas fixed to words are arbitrary, the same words may be employed for signifying different things; and it is impossible to be understood, unless we first agree on the sense we would give to each word.

After all, nothing is so childish as to dispute about the sense of words; as they are made only for understanding

derstanding one another, what doth it signify what sense we fix to them, provided we thereby explain ourselves the better. Pray, tell me then, what you mean by right reason.

Philo. What do I mean by it? I understand by it a reason, which forms a sound judgment of every thing, is capable of distinguishing the true from the false, the just from the unjust. But I perceive this is saying nothing. The term right reason alone, implies more than all these synonymous words put together.

Eraustus. You are not satisfied with your own definition, Philo; you are a little difficult. I know some who would be highly delighted with it, and be very much pleased with themselves for making such a one. However, it must be granted that it may be placed in the same rank with that which says black is not white.

Philo. I am very sensible of it, Eraustus; and was very glad to let you also see that I was not satisfied with it. For this time, I throw back the ball to you, that I may not amuse you all night with definitions that say nothing.

Eraustus. Must a reveur once more tell his reveries about reason to philosophers, to men, who have spent their whole lives in enquiring into the reason of things?

But what is the meaning of the term reason? Is it a thing that knows, or one that ought to be known?

known? Most certainly the latter, because inanimate things have not a reason that knows, but a reason which may be known; that is, their cause, their end, and their use. The term reason is synonymous to these; which, when taken right, comes up to the idea we have formed of the true. Is not the term reason, on some other occasions, taken in the same sense as the true, the just, and the equitable, the cause, or the motive, &c. and not for the understanding of each in particular? By confounding things of different natures, the term reason is become so modish, that we use it on all occasions, and every one pretends to have reason on his side.

Philo. You shew me what I never observed before, Erastus; reason, which ought to know, is one thing; and reason, which ought to be known, is another. Our language must be very barren, if it has but one word to express two things so different.

Erastus. When we propose to speak exactly, and come to precise ideas, it will be no hard matter to avoid ambiguity, by employing the word understanding to express reason which ought to know, or the reason of each man in particular; and leaving the word reason in general to signify what ought to be known, what is reasonable, just, true, equitable, &c.

Crito. You put me in mind, Erastus, that the term reason is applied on a thousand occasions,

where that of understanding cannot be admitted; as when we speak of the reason we have for doing or not doing a thing: when we maintain that we have reason on our side; and that nothing is more reasonable than to act in such or such a manner. It is plain that by the word reason, we here mean something universal, to which every one has a right, and which belongs to no man in particular.

Erastus. When we say, we must consult reason, right reason, have we an idea of something particular, or universal?

Crito. Of something universal, without doubt; for such an expression doth not imply that we must consult the reason of Mr. Such-a-one, or Mr. Such-a-one. By right reason we here understand something general, which every man is in a condition of knowing and consulting himself, without being under a necessity of passing through the canal of others.

Erastus. In the next place, I ask; is right reason one, or many?

Crito. One, undoubtedly, as it is universal. I have not so soon forgot my catechism, which tells me, that what is universal is one, &c.

Erastus. Very well answered. Here is a scholar who will make some progress: he has a good memory.

Philo. He, perhaps, imagines he shall engross that character to himself. I remember it as well

as he ; and if our professor will examine me, he shall see it.

Eraſtus. Well, Sir, is right reaſon invariably right ; or is it ſometimes falſe ?

Philo. If it could be falſe, it would ceaſe to be right reaſon ; as I have learnt in my catechiſm, that a rule would ceaſe to be a rule, if it ceaſed to be right.

Eraſtus. Very pertinently replied. Tell me, Crito ; is it not evident then that right reaſon is one, univerſal, and invariably right ?

Crito. Yes.

Eraſtus. My firſt ſcholar has given a judicious answer. I would know of the ſecond, whether it doth not thence follow, that the whole doctrine of the catechiſm, relating to the invariable, right, only, univerſal rule, is applicable to what we have called right reaſon.

Philo. Without doubt.

Crito. Very learnedly replied. Here now are ſcholars, who might have a title to the prize in reveries on the firſt promotion.

Crito. Mr. Profeſſor, perhaps, thinks he has to do with ſcholars, docil enough to answer with yes's, and without doubts ; but I have a difficulty to propoſe to him, which, perhaps, he will not ſolve ſo eaſily.

Eraſtus. That difficulty will, perhaps, be ſtarted in the character of Crito, not in the quality of a ſcholar.

Crito. It is this, *Eraſtus*. You here apply to right reaſon, all you before applied to conſcience. Do you confound them together; or ſuppoſe conſcience and right reaſon one and the ſame thing?

Eraſtus. I gueſſed you was going to object in the character of Crito. In order to explain ſo great a difficulty, he muſt answer me once more in quality of a ſcholar. I aſk then; is the language of conſcience invariably that of truth? Are the orders, which it pronounces, ſometimes true, and ſometimes falſe?

Crito. Invariably true.

Eraſtus. Can the language of right reaſon be ſometimes true and ſometimes falſe? Or, is it invariably conformable to that of truth?

Crito. It is invariably right, or true, like that of conſcience.

Eraſtus. Can you tell me, what is the origin of the true?

Crito. Truth, as it is ſimple.

Eraſtus. Are there two ſimple truths, or only one?

Crito. Only one.

Eraſtus. The language of conſcience, therefore, and that of right reaſon, have but one and the ſame origin.

Crito.

Crito. I grant it, Erastus, both in quality of Crito, and that of scholar. But still, methinks, there should be some distinction between right reason and conscience.

Erastus. That may very well be, Crito; and were it not time to sleep, rather than indulge our reveries, we might pursue that question. But I am so drowsy at present, that should I pretend to talk, I should run the risk of telling you nothing but dreams; and I should not be very well pleased with acquiring the title of master-dreamer, beside that of professor of reveries, with which you have dignified me.

Crito. How do you know, Erastus, but you may have a dream to-night, that may confer that title on you?

Erastus. If it happens so, Crito, I will place it to your account.

Philo. In the mean time, let us go, and try to sleep, and we shall see to-morrow which of us three has had the finest dream. He shall be stiled, master-dreamer, or, to speak more honourably, professor in the art of dreaming.

DIALOGUE XVII.

CRITO, PHILO, and ERASTUS.

Crito to *Erastus*. **G**OOD-morrow, Sir. Is there no dream on the carpet to-day?

Erastus. If you have any to produce, I am ready to hear it.

Crito. Philo is furnished, no doubt.

Philo. He imagines he has guessed it. I assure you, however, I shall produce no dream; for if I had one last night, I have quite forgot it; and I think that a sufficient excuse for not repeating it.

Erastus. Perhaps, Philo, that excuse may not always hold good; you may recollect it, when you least think of it.

Crito. However, we have a magician in our company, who can give us an exact account of it. In the mean time, let us stick to our reveries, *Erastus* has engaged his word for one more.

Erastus. You are merciless officers; I find there is no getting out of your hands, without paying down ready money. But you will be surprized if I should give you fables instead of reveries.

Crito. No matter, so you do but pay.

[Here *Erastus* pulls an old manuscript out of his pocket, opens it, and reads.]

" A certain

" A certain necromancer has left us the following relation in his memoirs.

" Between *Arabia Petrea*, and the northern extremity of the *Persian gulf*, lies a subterraneous country of vast extent, which is called the Catacombs.

" The inhabitants of that place are born with very weak eyes, and are very oddly formed in other respects. The obscurity of the country suits them in all regards. They cannot bear the light, without feeling the most violent pain. We are told, however, that the sun has in that country a different property from what it has in ours; that it insensibly cures all indispositions of the eye; that those who have courage enough to expose themselves to its heat, and bear the pain it causes at first, accustom themselves to it by degrees, and in time come to have no apprehensions from it.

" We are likewise told that those, whom the light has penetrated most directly, and thus cured most perfectly, love it so as to be unable to live without it.

" This country, though its darkness differs but little from our night, is not entirely inaccessible to some rays of the sun. The inhabitants can allow it entrance more or less as they please by little wickets, which it is in their power to open or shut. These wickets are placed at openings
" made

“made in the rock, for allowing a passage for the
“light.

“Beside the inlets, which the light may have
“through these wickets, there are here and there
“little paths, through which the light makes its way
“by several windings. These paths are a sort of
“turnings, which always run upwards, and are full
“of stones, each of them serving as a step.

“As the people go up, the light grows stronger
“and less indirect; and they begin to feel some-
“thing of the sun’s heat, in proportion as they are
“enlightened by it.

“These paths, which extend several leagues,
“terminate below in the dark country, or the king-
“dom of the Catacombs; and above issue into the
“light country in a vast plain.

“The inhabitants of the dark country can, by
“means of their paths, hold some communication
“with those of the light country: they may even
“be led to it, if they please; as the inhabitants of
“the light country, may in their turn, go down
“into the dark country.

“It appears from the memoirs, left us by histo-
“rians, that those different people have but little
“inclination to visit one another: that most of
“them have a very great aversion to it, which they
“cannot prevail with themselves to overcome.

“This aversion may be accounted for in the fol-
“lowing manner: to begin with those of the
“gloomy

"gloomy regions; it is easy to conceive that the
"pain they feel from the light is one of the chief
"causes of it. Besides, they are born in that coun-
"try, they find there not only all necessaries of
"life, but likewise all that can render it agreeable.
"The darkness is so far from being a grievance,
"that it is even pleasant to them. They have the
"secret of making lamps, the light of which doth
"not affect their eyes like that of the sun. By
"that light they discern objects, and make several
"works.

"These people are very laborious; and abound
"in manufactures of all sorts, proportioned to the
"wants of the inhabitants. Art supplies them with
"what nature has not afforded.

"As their sight is extremely weak, most of their
"manufactures are employed for relieving them in
"that point. This relief consists in an almost in-
"finite variety of glasses of all sorts. These glasses
"are so artfully made, that they do not appear like
"those made in Europe. Some of them are design-
"ed for magnifying objects; others for telescopes.
"They have glasses well coloured, which commu-
"nicate the same colours to the object: others are
"proper for embellishing, and hiding, or at least
"extenuating all deformities.

"Beside these different qualities, they have one
"which is peculiar to them; they may serve as
"looking-glasses. Thus it is easy for a man, who
"holds

“ holds them, to see himself in what light he pleases,
“ and give himself embellishing colours. The
“ worst is, that others, who are masters of the same
“ secret, often strip him of those borrowed colours,
“ and expose his natural ugliness to view.

“ As to the inhabitants of the light country,
“ it is not surprising that they cannot prevail with
“ themselves to go down into the gloomy regions.
“ They have suffered too much in leaving them.
“ After having endured, in long and troublesome
“ roads, all the pain the sun can give to weak eyes,
“ the light is grown familiar to them, and they are
“ as well pleased with it as if it was their own ele-
“ ment. By the same light, they, at one glance,
“ discern both persons and things. They have no
“ farther occasion for glasses; - which now would
“ even hinder them from seeing, or, at least, from
“ viewing objects as they are; and they are no
“ longer in the humour of seeing them disguised.
“ They have likewise lost the inclination to bor-
“ rowing colours for giving them beauty in their
“ own eyes, or those of others. The light, which
“ by a quality peculiar to that country, serves them
“ as a mirror, gives them a distinct view of their
“ remaining defects: they are willing to see their
“ own imperfections, and have them visible to
“ others.

“ After this account, are we to be surprized
“ that the gloomy country, and the manner of liv-
“ ing

“ing there, are become insupportable to them?
“not to mention the stifling air of that country; an
“air that nothing purifies; and which must be in-
“fected by exhalations from the bodies pent up in
“it. This air, compared to that breathed by the
“inhabitants of the light country, would pass ra-
“ther for a fog that hinders respiration, than an air
“proper to promote it.

“We read in the *Memoirs of* that a
“young African, who was conducted by a genius
“to view the several curiosities of the world, travel-
“led into these two countries. I shall here give
“you his own account of them both. I pass by
“his description of the situation of the country, to
“come to the historical part.

“The genius, who instructed me, says he, hav-
“ing shewn the different situation of these two king-
“doms, and the passages from one to the other,
“put me on observing the different manners of the
“inhabitants, and gave me some pieces of history
“concerning them, which he tells me are worthy of
“credit.

“These two people, said he, have one common
“origin. It is related, that they were all at first
“placed in the country of light, and were well
“treated by the king of that country; but that an
“accident befalling them, which prejudiced their
“eyes, and at the same time made them deformed
“in other respects, obliged them to fly from the
“light,

“light, and seek a retreat in the Catacombs: that,
“having found an asylum suitable to their indisposi-
“tion, they settled there, and set up the manufac-
“tures we now see among them.

“I then asked my genius, whence came those
“men who at present inhabit the country of light?

“They quitted the Catacombs, said he, at the
“repeated invitations of the king of light. We are
“told that the same prince, moved with compassion
“for those distempered people, continued to press
“their return: that, for that purpose, he directed
“the making of those paths, which insensibly lead
“from one country to the other: that he sent them
“repeated messages, with letters patent, assuring
“them the light, they so much dreaded, was the
“only remedy that could cure them: he mentioned
“the persons sent to them as so many witnesses of
“the truth of what he said. Those messengers
“being taken from among them, had been coura-
“geous enough to expose themselves to the heat of
“the sun, and thus came in time not to fear it.

“History tells us, those messengers were received
“more or less favourably, according to the different
“periods of time, in which they appeared: that
“great numbers of them were ill treated and even
“persecuted, not as messengers from the king, but
“as impostors: that, however, the letters patent
“were registered in the public annals: that after
“the death of those messengers, both they and the
“letters

"letters were held in great veneration: that they
"were restored to the title of the king's messengers,
"and the letters to that of royal patents.

"Beside all this, as these letters came from the
"country of light, and were only so many eviden-
"ces in its favour, they insensibly received the ap-
"pellation of light. Hence the name of light is
"become familiar to the inhabitants of the gloomy
"regions. As the name of the king of light has
"in all times been honoured by them, as still pro-
"fessing themselves his subjects; every one was de-
"sirous of being furnished with the letters of light:
"every one valued himself on asserting their excel-
"lency; their name and that of the king echoed
"from all parts.

"It is very remarkable that the same prince,
"having, from time to time, sent messengers with
"such letters, they were all ill treated. But what
"is still more surprizing, is, the king's son, appear-
"ing to confirm the testimony of his messengers,
"was taken for the greatest impostor of all, and
"put to death as such.

"Seized with astonishment at an event so incre-
"dible, I asked my genius, whether the king's son
"was provided with such letters patent, as were
"proper to make him known to his subjects.

"He was, replied he, provided with most authen-
"tic testimonies, beside the evidences given of him
"in the other letters patent. Were not those for-
"mer

“mer letters consulted? said I. They were, an-
 “swered my genius; and it was by those very let-
 “ters that they thought themselves authorized to
 “reject him.

*Law &
 Prophecy*

“Some difference they found between the for-
 “mer letters, and those brought by the king’s son,
 “was sufficient for making them not know him.
 “This, at least, was their pretence; but at the
 “bottom, it was their aversion to the light, for
 “which the prince had opened a passage more than
 “all the former messengers had done. Besides, the
 “testimony which he gave, engaged great num-
 “bers of the inhabitants to walk in the narrow
 “paths: the credit of glasses began to decline:
 “several persons ventured to open the little wick-
 “ets, in order to accustom themselves to the im-
 “pressions of the light, and view objects by it.

*Lo and
 his
 apostles*

“The wickets being a little opened, let too
 “strong a light into the country. Beside what
 “their eyes suffered from it, they discovered defor-
 “mities, which till then had been hid: a remedy
 “must be found for an evil that might be attended
 “with such pernicious consequences, and convert
 “the kingdom of the Catacombs into a desert.
 “This was prudently performed by cutting off not
 “only the prince himself, but all his subjects, who
 “came after him to bear testimony of him.

“Now begins a new epocha. Soon after the
 “prince’s death, he was acknowledged as the
 “king’s

“ king’s son : the act of those who had put him to
“ death was looked on with horror : his history was
“ recorded, as also that of his servants, and the
“ testimonies they had borne of him : their writings
“ were received as even more authentick, than those
“ of the former messengers.

“ Here, I asked my Genius, whether these last
“ testimonies given to light had engaged any num-
“ ber of the inhabitants to walk in the narrow
“ paths.

“ Some, replied he, ran to them with eagerness
“ immediately after the prince’s death ; but means
“ were soon found for barricading the avenues.
“ At first, people were intimidated by cruelties ;
“ but, it being observed that these only enhanced
“ the desire of making their way to the country
“ of light, a milder method was employed, which
“ succeeded better in keeping men within the king-
“ dom of the Catacombs.

“ This method consisted in proving to them that
“ the country, where they lived, was part of the
“ kingdom of light ; and that they really enjoyed
“ it, was evident from their being in possession of
“ the letters of light, and their being proposed to all
“ the inhabitants, as the only rule of their conduct.
“ In order to facilitate the reception of them, and
“ relieve the weakness of their sight, new glasses
“ were invented, more nicely made than the for-
“ mer ; several sorts of them were delivered to each
“ man.

“man. By the assistance of these glasses, new discoveries were every day made in the letters or book of light. Never was people more enlightened.

“But there is an inconveniency remaining. As the same glasses serve to colour objects, and give them several forms, according as each man managed them, the contrarieties found in the book of light, were as numerous as the glasses made for shewing contrarieties. One saw black, where another saw white. Some perceived mountains, where others found only some grains of sand; in short, every one saw in them the road he was pleased to chuse, as clear as the sun at noon-day. Thus a division has been introduced between the inhabitants of the same kingdom, between those who agree in receiving the same book of light, and call themselves children of light. From that time they have been separated and distinguished one from the other by different liveries, and different surnames; but not one of the parties would quit the title of partisan of light. At the same time they charged one another reciprocally with being sectaries of the kingdom of darkness.

“As the followers of each party saw objects through glasses made by those of his own, every one accused the glasses made elsewhere of distorting objects, and presenting black for white.

“Every

"Every one was ready to lend his neighbour the
"glasses he used, as the only true ones, which shew
"things as they are.

"I then enquired of my Genius how long this
"contest had been depending. Above sixteen hun-
"dred years, said he, in relation to the substance and
"essence. For the division was not so evident at
"first; but the matter may be traced still higher,
"in the first regard.

"I asked whether any one is accused of being
"the author of this division. Some, replied he,
"attribute it to the policy of the prince of the Cata-
"combs, who is, they say, at the bottom of this
"affair, though he does not appear in it. It is
"thought his design was by this means to detain
"his subjects in his kingdom; and, by amusing
"them with disputes on the book of light, make
"them give over all thoughts of those narrow paths,
"which lead to the kingdom of light. The same
"prince is suspected of having a considerable hand
"in the sudden distemper with which the first inha-
"bitants of the country of light were seized, and
"of having brought them under his dominion by
"his stratagems. At least this is related as a fact
"in the book which bears testimony of the light.

"But whatever becomes of this question, the
"policy ascribed to that prince, produced its in-
"tended effect. Each party, pretending to be
"partizans of light, thought no more of quitting
"the

“the country: each of them thought itself well
“situated; and, if any entertained an idea of a
“more luminous country, they immediately said
“within themselves, that this light was reserved
“only for another life: that it was a rash attempt
“to pretend to make their way to it, while they
“sojourned in this body; in a body so little dis-
“posed to admit of light: that they could not face
“it without feeling great pain; that without that
“light, the kingdom of the Catacombs afforded
“enough; and that they might, in all respects, re-
“main there to advantage, be accommodated with
“all sorts of conveniences; after which, when they
“left these bodies, they should be received into the
“kingdom of light.

“In this the most opposite parties generally agree.
“The contest, however, still subsists, the breach
“grows wider; and it is affirmed that, beside the
“division, which reigns between the several par-
“ties, each party is as much divided within itself.

“Here I asked my genius, whether, among all
“the inhabitants of this kingdom, there were none
“who endeavoured a re-union. Those only, said
“he, who dare undertake to tread in the narrow
“paths which lead to the country of light. How
“so, said I? Doth that remove the differences be-
“tween the parties? You shall know, replied he,
“how this comes to pass. Whatever distance there
“is from one path to another at first, they come
“nearest

“nearer together as the travellers advance. It is
“observable, that several of those paths meet, and
“become one. Thus men are re-united, who,
“at their first setting out, were at a great distance
“one from another.

“What farther contributes to re-unite them,
“added he, is, that in proportion as they approach
“the light, and their eyes become able to bear it,
“they are all illuminated by the same light. The
“diversity of lights, which occasions division in the
“kingdom of the Catacombs, having no place
“here, all subjects of dispute cease. As they see
“objects by the same light, they no longer differ
“in the judgment they form of them.

“After all, we are told that some variety in the
“manner of beholding things doth not divide
“them. Their chief concern is to proceed and
“walk toward the light, rather than take notice of
“the objects they meet in their way.

“But, said I, what is it that makes this road so
“difficult? And why is it trod by so few? Some
“courage is required for that, replied my genius;
“on one hand, to place one’s self above all that
“may be thought or said by the inhabitants of the
“country; in whose opinion those roads are use-
“less, and even dangerous: on the other, to bear
“all the pain, that weak eyes may feel from the
“impressions of light; not to mention the length
“and difficulties of the journey.

“I then

“ I then asked, whether the difficulties were all-
“ ways the same in this road; and whether some
“ had more to struggle with than others. The dif-
“ ficulties, said he, vary *ad infinitum*, according to
“ the disposition, age, and courage of the persons.

“ The first step, which is commonly the most
“ difficult, gives some infinitely more pain than
“ others. I desired to know the reason of this;
“ and who suffered most on this occasion. Those
“ said he, whose indisposition of eyes is grown in-
“ veterate by age, and who for that reason must
“ feel more acute pain from the light. Another
“ thing that renders this first step so difficult to
“ them, is, that they till then thought themselves in
“ the mansions of light: they had not observed the
“ indisposition of their eyes in regard to it; and
“ they must be convinced of that, before they re-
“ solve on this first step. Great numbers stop here,
“ not being able even to permit themselves to be
“ undeceived in that point.

“ Young people have less difficulty in making
“ this first step, as their indisposition in regard to
“ the light is less strong, and as they did not ima-
“ gine themselves so clear-sighted as the former.
“ Speaking in general, continued he, some excep-
“ tions are to be made. Each age has obstacles
“ to surmount, which are peculiar to it; and in
“ every age the decision is made by the will.
“ However, all things considered, young people
“ have

"have the advantage; and among them, such as
"have courage, and presume least on their being
"enlightened.

"How happens it, said I, that among people, who
"believe themselves in the country of light, some
"think of leaving it, and going in quest of ano-
"ther?

"This commonly happens, answered my ge-
"nius, when on reading the book, which bears tes-
"timony of the light, some open the wickets to
"give themselves light, and thus find that light of
"a very different kind from what shines in the king-
"dom of the Catacombs: that the book which
"bears the title of light, is written only to give
"testimony of it, and direct men to the country
"where it shines. The same book points out the
"little paths, as the roads which others have taken
"to arrive there. Thus they are at full liberty to
"determine whether they will take that road, or
"remain in the gloomy regions. If they resolve
"on the latter, they are obliged to shut the wickets,
"to avoid being hurt by the rays, which their eyes
"are not able to bear; for you must know that
"the rays of light, which pass through the wickets,
"give much more pain than what shines in the
"little paths.

"But, replied I, is not the same light the source
"of both? Yes, said he; but, as it is more strength-
"ened by the wickets than by those paths, and darts

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"on

“ on such as reside on the same place, it strikes them
 “ so as to give them more pain than is felt by those
 “ whom it enlightens in the paths, and walk with
 “ out settling any where.

“ I then enquired of my genius, how they, who
 “ are unacquainted with the book which bears testi-
 “ mony of the light, could, without that guide
 “ find the paths that lead to it.

“ The rays, said he, which they receive at the
 “ wickets, direct them to the small paths; then
 “ they begin to have some experience of the light
 “ and understand that it comes from another coun-
 “ try. Whatever their eyes suffer from it at first
 “ they think it beautiful, and perceive, by a *ſe*
 “ *ſçai quoi*, which is a consequence of their origin
 “ that they were made for the country, where it
 “ shines. This sentiment they have in common
 “ with all those, who have not increased their in-
 “ disposition by the continued use of the coloured
 “ glasses. They then try to find some opening
 “ through which they may make their way to that
 “ light. While they are groping along, they dis-
 “ cover the little paths, and attempt to tread in
 “ them; and from that moment it is entirely in
 “ their own power to pursue their journey. The
 “ same light serving them as a guide, and continu-
 “ ally increasing, it is, I say, entirely in their own
 “ power, if they will but bear the fatigues which
 “ are inseparable from such an attempt.

“ Methinks

"Methinks, said I, those, of whom you spoke last,
"more easily come to a resolution of travelling
"toward the country of light, than those in pos-
"session of the book, which bears testimony of
"it. May it not thence be concluded, that the
"said book is become rather prejudicial than ad-
"vantageous to them?

"It becomes prejudicial to those only, replied
"he, who pervert the use of it; but is infinitely
"advantageous to others. It serves them as a
"testimony through their whole journey, by the
"relation they discover between their own steps,
"and the tracks of the prince and his messengers.
"It supports and encourages them under their diffi-
"culties and fatigues, and lets them know the
"happy lot reserved for the end of their journey.

"Hence it appears that those, who are in pos-
"session of this book, have a considerable advan-
"tage over those, who never heard of it; they
"have, at least, more encouragement and assist-
"ance, and may thus unravel such difficulties as
"prove inexplicable to others.

"As to those, to whom this book becomes pre-
"judicial, they can blame none but themselves.
"This book directs them to the light, and points
"out the way to it; shews them the footsteps of the
"prince, and invites them to join him. This is
"the use of a testimony. Let us now see how it
"is perverted, and made to serve contrary ends.

“ Under pretence of doing it more honour, men
“ divest it of the title of a testimony, and call it the
“ light. Hence it is concluded that the gloomy
“ kingdom is well enlightened, that this light is
“ more than sufficient, and that it would be unnecessary to seek for any elsewhere.

“ Here I asked my genius, whether the prince of
“ light sends any fresh messenger to reform this
“ abuse; or whether he gives himself no farther
“ concern for the inhabitants of the gloomy country.

“ It is thought, answered he, that he is still equally concerned for them; but it is added, that it
“ would be unnecessary for him to send messengers;
“ because the people are in possession of the book
“ which contains the testimony of the old messengers: and, as the prince doth nothing usefess, it
“ is concluded he will send no more.

“ On that foot, said I, if the prince formed a different judgment of what may be useful or not so,
“ and thought proper to send other messengers,
“ would they be treated as impostors, merely because the prince ought to do nothing usefess?
“ Yes, replied he; if not by all the inhabitants, at least, by those who have already determined that
“ the prince will send none.

“ But, said I, would not the way of examination
“ take place in this case with several of the inhabitants? Perhaps it might, answered he; but there
“ is reason to believe, that the different glasses,
“ through

"through which great numbers would see them,
"would prevent their knowing them; and that only
"such as would see with their own eyes, and open
"the wickets in order to receive light, would be
"in a condition of knowing them.

"I then asked my genius, what is the lot of
"those who obstinately resolve to continue in the
"kingdom of the Catacombs?

"The most horrible that can be imagined, said
"he. After some days diversion allowed them by
"the prince, in order to amuse them, they are re-
"moved into another country belonging to the same
"prince, where they feel the utmost effects of his
"vengeance. But what torments them most, is,
"that the glasses and false mirrors being then of no
"farther use, they see themselves, and are seen by
"others, as so many monsters. In a word, they
"see all that the obscurity of the gloomy kingdom
"had hid from their eyes; and their bones are rack-
"ed with acute pains, which the numbness, occa-
"sioned by the moisture of the said country, had
"suspended; beside all which, their eyes, which
"could not bear the light, are here obliged to suffer
"a devouring fire. In short, to complete their mi-
"sery, they have only what they themselves chose,
"and might have avoided."

Here end the Memoirs of the African.

Crito. This is a fable as valuable as reveries; we are content to be paid in such coin, *Eraustus*.

Philo. We accept of it as good money; but the question will be, to which of us *Eraustus* will lend this manuscript?

Eraustus. To end all disputes, to neither of you. (Here *Eraustus* puts the manuscript into his pocket.) It shall return to the place from whence it came; and if you will take my advice, we will go home.

DIALOGUE XVIII.

CRITO, PHILO, and ERAUSTUS.

Philo. **I** Hope *Eraustus* has brought the manuscript with him. I wished him no good last night for refusing it me. I wanted to take a second view of several things.

Eraustus. I thought you had been surfeited with fables. What would the world say, should it be known that philosophers, such as *Crito* and *Philo*, amuse themselves with reading or hearing fables?

Crito. You see, *Eraustus*, that *Philo* is a little childish in that particular. And I own I have no less desire to see the African's narrative. Would you believe that, as much a fable as it is, I find it resembles truth in several respects.

Eraustus. That is surprising.

Philo.

Philo. You philosophers can find relations in things the most unlike.

Erastus. In reality, who would have thought of looking for truth in the memoirs of a Necromancer, or in the narrative of an African? None but Crito could do that.

Crito. Without doubt. What if I should tell you, I find some relation between the coloured glasses, and false reasonings or sophisms?

Erastus. Wonderful penetration! You shall accept of the task of unfolding those relations more at large.

Crito. I perceive you will want me for that; and I give you my word to do it. But first, Erastus must perform what he promised us the day before yesterday.

Erastus. What, I pray?

Crito. Have you forgot, Erastus, that after Mr. Professor had examined his scholars, it was concluded that right reason and conscience had but one and the same origin? Whereupon a question was started, whether there is not some difference between them. This Mr. Professor engaged to explain.

Erastus. Your memory is better than mine, Crito. In my dealings with you, I must take care not to be too lavish in promises. I see you are not inclined to abate any thing of your right.

Crito. What you say, is truer than you imagine, Erastus; and that in other respects than these

in question. I mean that, if interest was at all concerned in the affair, you would find me much stiffer in my demands.

Erastus. I easily take your word for that, dear Crito.

Philo. Perhaps Crito would not have been displeased, had you been a little incredulous.

Erastus. He would have been in the wrong for saying it, if he did not desire to be believed. I take all my friends say of their own failings, literally; as I am willing they should take what I may say of mine in the same manner.

Crito. I will not tell you that I am a little vexed at dropping that word. I am now reduced to an alternative, very mortifying to self-love. I must of necessity pass in your judgment either for a selfish person, or a dissembler. Which would you advise me to chuse?

Erastus. Is there any choice to make, dear Crito, in regard to a thing that is or is not? Doth not the true subsist independent of opinion?

Crito. I own that, Erastus; but is it not customary to enquire what is advantageous or disadvantageous, rather than what is just or true?

Erastus. You are in the right, Crito; I had forgot that maxim so universally received in practice, though generally disowned in speculation.

Philo.

Philo. Methinks a maxim ought to be admitted by the understanding or reason, before it is received by the will.

Eraslus. That is a great question. It is evident from experience, that the will rather determines the understanding, than is determined by it.

Philo. I remember we agreed on that point the other day, when we were speaking of the power which the will has over the whole man, and over the understanding in particular. But may it not be objected, that the will doth not come to a determination, till the understanding has found the true or the just?

Eraslus. Be pleased to observe, *Philo*, that the persuasion of the understanding, concerning the true or the just, influences the will only in the dernier resort; but that at first the will secretly resolves on what it desires the understanding should persuade. The former commands the latter, with an authority which it even conceals from itself, to give it a view of the true and the just, in what it judges most advantageous.

Crito. At that rate, I should think the will may be compared to a queen who should first secretly gain the consent of her parliament, for the decision of some cause, and afterwards order the same cause to be pleaded before her and the whole parliament, where a plurality of voices is to determine either

for right or equity; after which she should pronounce sentence in favour of equity.

Erastus. Might it not likewise happen that, from the art used by the council to embellish the cause, the queen may be persuaded she is directed by equity alone in her decision? Hence it is easy to conclude that, when the will has beforehand declared for what is agreeable to it, it finds innumerable reasons for persuading itself of what it wishes.

Philo. Such reasons are not certainly what you have called right reason; for that being always right, cannot accommodate itself to, or agree with, the false; besides, those reasons are many, whereas right reason is but one.

Crito. Here is a scholar, who knows how to make use of his catechism. For my part, I always forget myself, and, like a troublesome scholar, ask Mr. Professor to explain the difference between conscience and right reason, since they both have the same origin.

Erastus to Crito. Is the light of the sun one, or many?

Crito. One only.

Erastus. Very well. Though the light is but one, is it not endowed with several different properties, according to the subjects on which it acts?

Crito. Yes.

Erastus. Among other properties, has it not these two in particular; that of making itself felt

or

or perceived by sense; and that of making us perceive or discern an infinity of objects?

Crito. Certainly.

Erasmus. This is understanding things. But tell me; is there not some difference between the bare and undoubted sentiment which you have, for example, of its being day at present; and the determinate action by which you open your eyes to discern the objects around you, by the help of the said light?

Crito. Without doubt.

Erasmus. This is answering exactly. You grant then that a cause, one and the same in its origin, may vary in its effects, or shew itself in different manners.

Crito. That is certain.

Erasmus. Very well. Do you not now think it would be easy, by this emblem, to find out the difference between conscience and right reason?

Crito. Yes.

Erasmus. If simple truth be the origin of both, as we have proved, may we not compare the effect it produces on the conscience, to that simple and sudden sentiment, by which we begin to experience what light is?

Crito. I think so.

Erasmus. And may we not also compare right reason to the day which the same light diffuses on
L 6 objects,

objects, and to the simple action of the sight, by which it discerns or views them?

Crito. I think we may.

Erastus. This shews your judgment. Now to my second scholar. We have seen that simple truth, which is but one, shews itself in man two different ways; by which of them does it begin to make itself known?

Philo. It begins to make itself perceived or known in the conscience.

Erastus. Very well. Why does it begin with conscience, before right reason? Is it not because the light makes itself perceived, in a sudden and simple manner, before it distinctly shews any object?

Philo. That is the very reason.

Erastus. Does not your catechism say,* that simple truth, as the right rule, labours only to make man upright?

Philo. True.

Erastus. That, in order to make man upright, it must begin with shewing the false within him.

Philo. Yes.

Erastus. And that it makes him perceive the false in his will, before it shews him the false in his ideas?

Philo. Exactly so.

* See Letter 3d. from Erastus to Crito.

Erastus. Has it not likewise been said, that the will ought to be corrected before the ideas ; because that faculty is supreme in man, and by it he may be led into the way of truth, when it is upright ; as he is strengthened by it in the way of lying and seduction, when it is false ?

Philo. Yes.

Erastus. May not it thence be concluded, that man is incapable of discerning the true, or of consulting right reason, if the will is false ?

Philo. Certainly.

Erastus. And that is only in proportion to the uprightness of his will, that his ideas are rectified, or he is guided by right reason in discerning the true ?

Philo. Without doubt.

Erastus. This is sufficient for explaining the section in our catechism, which we undertook to consider to-day.

Crito. I do not repent of having been a little troublesome ; Mr. Professor may expect I shall be so again, as occasion offers.

Erastus. Perhaps, you may not always find him in the humour of acting the casuist ; and the scholar, with all his importunity, may have nothing to advance. But let us talk no more at present of professor and scholar. I have kept my word ; it is *Crito's* business to keep his. He ought to remember,

ber, he promised to explain the relations he finds between the coloured glasses and false reasonings.

Crito. No doubt, without my assistance you would not be able to discover them; or tell us, for example, that apparent or subtle reasonings have the property of making objects appear bigger or less, according to each man's particular taste or interest; that, by virtue of the same secret, every one may see things in the light, which best pleases him; give himself fine colours, impose on the world; and, in short, varnish over the false with the appearance of the true, and disguise the true in such a manner, that it cannot be known or distinguished.

Philo. A man must be very cunning to find out such exact relations.

Crito. I knew you would admire the justness of my discernment. What if I should tell you, I find still more relations with this day's catechism on conscience and right reason?

Philo. We shall be agreeably surprized at the discovery.

Crito. You are to know, then, that I find a relation between the openings, through which the inhabitants of the gloomy country may receive light, and the means which each man may have of being enlightened by simple truth: that the rays of light, which pass through the wickets, might represent the first traces of simple truth on the conscience; that is, that remorse and those apprehensions, which
shew

shew a man he is in the false, and at the same time invite him to take the opposite road.

That the light, which shines on those who walk in the little paths, may signify that of right reason, which continually increases, in proportion to the progress made by the will in uprightness.

That the liberty, allowed the inhabitants of the said country to open, or shut the wickets, expresses the liberty given to every man of hearing or admitting, more or less, the reproofs and invitations of conscience, or shutting up the avenues in order to exclude them.

That the more or less acute pains, which the eyes suffer from the rays of light, in proportion to the indisposition of that organ, may signify the trouble and confusion occasioned by seeing ourselves in the false, after we have received the applause of the world for being in uprightness and truth.

That this pain is rendered more sensible by our reluctancy in quitting the road we had taken.

Philo. As you go on, Crito, you will leave us no room for guessing. I would add, that the glasses, or apparent reasonings, come in very seasonably to the assistance of those, who cannot prevail with themselves to take another road.

They serve to justify their choice, to persuade them they are already where they should be; in a word,

word, that the road in which they are travelling, is that of uprightness and truth.

I here relate only one circumstance of my story; and should certainly find several others in the same fable, had I Crito's penetration.

Crito. Though my penetration in this point is somewhat uncommon, I will not engross the whole honour of it to myself. *Eraustus* must help us to explain one difficulty.

If the inhabitants of the gloomy kingdom represent those, who wilfully remain in the false, and in illusion; what are we to understand by the inhabitants of the country of light? What is that country? And what sort of people inhabit it?

Eraustus. It is easily comprehended, that the country opposite to that of the false, and illusion, must be that of truth and reality.

Crito. That is not my question, dear *Eraustus*, I would fain know whether the inhabitants who reside there, are in the body or out of the body.

Eraustus. To clear up that point, we shall very much want the assistance of the genius who conducted the African; and I wish he was hanged for not asking his governor some questions on that subject. Were we to deal in conjectures, I should say, I believe that country, taken in a strict and rigorous sense, to be the other world; since the idea of pure light, which is bounded by nothing, represents something farther, than the most advantage-

ous

ous dispositions which can be supposed in this life, in regard to truth.

However, to take it in a more extensive sense, it may be said, that as soon as the will enters into uprightness, it quits the false, and begins to enter into the element of the true, or of truth. The disposition of those, who wilfully remain in the false, is represented by the state of such as obstinately remain in the gloomy country; and that of those, who are making their way toward the country of light, represents the disposition of such as getting at a distance from the false, every day give more room to the passage of light.

Crito. Hence it may be concluded, that such as walk in the small paths, cease to be of the number of the inhabitants of the gloomy country; but can they be ranked with the inhabitants of the kingdom of light.

Eraſtus. The appellation of candidates or travellers towards the country of light, would suit them better than that of inhabitants; as the latter title signifies something fixed; which is not properly applied to persons in motion. However, as those paths are supposed very long, and the persons are all along more or less illuminated, as they are at a greater or less distance from the country of light; those who have travelled farthest in those paths, and thus make nearer approaches to the light, may be termed inhabitants of the light, in
comparison

comparison of such as make but small progress in the said paths: the light, which shines on the latter, being so indirect and weak, that it may rather be called a glimmering than light, in comparison of what shines on the former.

Philo. May not those, who are but just entered into the little paths, and therefore are still near neighbours to the gloomy kingdom, be considered as belonging to it, in the same manner as we call those inhabitants of light, who are nearest to it?

Eraſtus. We must distinguish, dear Philo, in regard to the nearness of both to the opposite country. Those who have just entered the little paths, though very near the gloomy kingdom, turn their backs on it, and remove farther and farther from it every step; whereas those, whom we have called inhabitants of the luminous country, instead of turning their backs on it, direct all their steps toward it. Hence it is evident, that both travelling one and the same road, though yet at a great distance one from the other, aim at the same end, and thus belong to the same country.

Philo. The fable seems to suppose, that those who walk in the little paths, may through them go back into the kingdom of the Catacombs.

Eraſtus. They certainly may, by an effect of their liberty; and as soon as they turn about, they will cease to belong to the kingdom of light. But it appears, according to our Necromancer's supposition,

sition, that those who have proceeded far enough in their journey to be pleased with the light, as their own element, would be far from entertaining any thought of returning. As to those who are still in the neighbourhood of the gloomy kingdom, they are still in danger of feeling some inclination of going back again. However, if their first resolution of leaving that country was strong, the temptation to return has little or no effect on them.

Crito. You will not guess, *Eraſtus*, what puzzles me in regard to the paths which reach from one country to the other: I would fain find out the fixed point, which divides one world from the other; and this is what I cannot discover. I observe, that of all who die in the same road, there are hardly two exactly in the same place. Some quit this world in the middle of the way: others at their first setting out. Where then is the term of this life?

Philo. Another thing that confounds me, is, to know whether those who die at the beginning of their journey, are transported in a moment to the abodes of pure light; if so, they will enjoy a privilege much beyond the others, who do not reach that country, till they have suffered the fatigue of a long and troublesome journey.

Eraſtus. You are both thus embarrassed by confounding the end of the road with the end of life. They are very different; several persons meeting with the end of life at the beginning of the road.

It

It follows from thence, that they are to travel all the way in the other world, which they have not travelled in this.

We must observe, after all, that the separation of the soul from the body makes no change in the essence of the journey; it is only a change of circumstances, in the form, or in the equipage of the traveller; just as if a coach chanced to break down on the road, the traveller will be obliged to make the rest of his journey on foot.

Crito. He certainly would be obliged to proceed on foot; because in a journey of this kind, no second conveniency can be found to supply the place of the first. But were it possible to be translated in a moment by a sort of enchantment, into the regions of pure light, as Philo supposes, that would be a shorter and much more agreeable way. What think you, *Era*stus?

*Era*stus. It would undoubtedly be shorter; but then the question is, whether the eye, as yet indisposed, would be able to bear that pure light, without being insensibly accustomed to it; and whether the impressions of so penetrating a light would not be more supportable to those who should be thus transported, than the most painful fatigues of the journey. We must consult the African's genius on this point.

Philo. I am thinking

Crito. On what?

Philo.

Philo. I remember Erastus promised to lend us fourteen letters in manuscript, which treat of the state of the dead.

Crito. Right. The good man may, perhaps, imagine we will dispense with his engagement.

Erastus. I know you too well for that; but I have not yet been able to lend them you, not having them in my hands. It is enough that I give you my word once more, and that you have them as soon as I am master of them.

Philo. Will they afford us the solution, which we would ask of the genius?

Erastus. Perhaps they may; and some other particulars.

Crito. May we not know the author's name?

Philo. I believe it may probably be Erastus.

Erastus. You will soon be undeceived on reading them, Philo; not to mention the difference of style, you will find, toward the end, some syllogisms in form, which

Crito. Syllogisms, Erastus! that is sufficient for clearing you of the charge. You have hitherto given them but bad quarter; and it is evident you are no friend to them.

Philo. I could not have imagined it possible for Erastus to relish any treatise, where syllogisms are employed.

Erastus. Very well. Philo gives me a good rub. At that rate I should be a formalist, or pedant,

dant, if the form of a book was capable of disgusting me. I should be as well pleased that the same power were ascribed to the binding.

Philo. Why, seriously, Erasmus, a fine binding gives a book a certain beauty, and prejudices a man in its favour. Judge then whether a less or more agreeable form is not sufficient to recommend, or discredit it, independently of its contents.

Erasmus. It must be acknowledged that there is something in the form, that imposes on the judgment, and that a man must be well advanced in the element of the true, before it has no influence on him. I do not pretend to have made so great progress, Philo; but in regard to syllogisms, the prejudice must be too gross, if the form alone was sufficient to affright me; and that, without enquiring whether they are employed for demonstrating what is true, or disguising what is false.

Philo. It seems a little hard to distinguish in this case; since all syllogisms appear designed for opposing the false, and demonstrating the true. How shall we strip them of that borrowed shell, or reach the true through it? Must we here have recourse to the coloured glasses?

Crito. Now you speak of coloured glasses, or false reasonings; I had just now a mind to ask Erasmus, whether he ranks all sorts of reasoning in the same class.

Erasmus.

Erastus. The very appellation of false reasonings supposes some may be true or just. Thus, for example; we have been walking here two hours and a half: it was past five, when we came from home: therefore it is now half an hour after seven, from all which I conclude it is time to think of supper.

Crito. That is an unanswerable argument.

Philo. I have no inclination to venture on the character of opponent, unless it be after supper.

D I A L O G U E XIX.

CRITO, PHILO, and ERASTUS.

Crito. **H**AVE you read the Gazette of this day, Erastus?

Erastus. Not yet; though you know I am a great news-monger.

Crito. Had I known you curious that way, I would have brought it.

Erastus. Very curious, without doubt, News is always agreeable; were it only to furnish matter for conversation. Is there any thing material to-day?

Crito. The Gazette says, that the scene acted the other day, between *Urania*, *Salome*, &c. has made some noise. That several persons are very desirous

desirous of seeing the letters, or reveries, which occasioned them : that Miss *Nerea*, being acquainted with some ingenious persons, has shewed them the said reveries ; on which there is a great diversity of opinions.

Erastus. This is material news indeed. May I be so curious as to ask where you found this Gazette ?

Crito. In more than one place, and in *Fortunatus*'s hands in particular, who is well acquainted with the matter, and was an eye-witness of part of what passed. He happened the other day to be at a house, where a person was reading them ; *Urania* and *Nerea* were present. The first of these ladies began with censuring the mixture of the serious with the gaiety of stile. The second directed her criticism against some faults in the construction, which betrayed the author's ignorance ; not to mention his ignorance of logic.

The remarks of these two ladies had not an equal weight with the whole company. Some were not displeased with the gaiety of the stile ; they were of opinion, that was not the least diminution of the weight of the matter. As to the faults in the construction, they were easily pardoned in a reveur.

Somebody took upon him to observe, that the form was to be passed by, and the substance to be considered. *Fortunatus* seconded him ; and added, that it would be proper to enquire what could be
the

the tendency of such principles. The majority differed from him; that would remove all subject of dispute too soon; and the whole terminated immediately in the uprightness of the will, and sincere obedience to conscience; those were principles which no one would venture to attack; it was easier to carp at trifles. The ladies, in particular, were for the latter game. To put an end to the difference, it was concluded that the ladies and the gentlemen of the same taste, should be allowed to examine the little niceties; while those of another taste, undertook to enquire into the substance of the things themselves.

Who excepted against this division? The ladies, without doubt. They would not hear of the proposal, especially when they found not one of the gentlemen would venture to engage in their party. What would have pleased them in general, displeased them in particular; they must be admitted to the examination or discussion of the things themselves.

Here the poor reveries were dissected. The first question proposed was, whether the authority of conscience ought to be raised above that of reasoning. Several thought not; but they were soon embarrassed by the sequel of the reveries; where it is proved, that if conscience is not allowed the precedence, it is rendered useless among men.

M

They

They then went on to enquire whether conscience is any thing or nothing. Not one would venture to give a voice for the negative: not one would pass for a person without conscience. After this, they enquired whether every man was obliged to obey his conscience; and here several of the company were gruelled.

Should they say one may be excused such obedience, this would be the same as having no conscience. Should they own that conscience ought always to be obeyed, this would justify the substance and main drift of the reveries. Here was no room left for chicanery.

This proved an ugly dilemma for the majority. Most of the company declined allowing either; and yet there was no medium: a choice must be made; either the reveries must gain the cause, or it must be maintained that obedience to conscience may be dispensed with.

Some declared for the former, and looked on the latter as what could not be maintained. They enumerated the horrid consequences which would result from that thesis; and appealed to their opponents, whether they would have any dealings with men of such principles. To this no reply was made. The opposition lay more in the wills, than in the understandings, which discovered more than they cared to see; and the subject was of too sim-

ple a nature to admit of obscurity; the common shift of such as would avoid the blow.

They were now reduced to the necessity of falling on the form again. The little niceties were once more brought on the carpet: some revoked the agreement made of sticking to the substance. What followed, however, was more diverting. The little niceties allowed more room for shewing their wit; besides, this discussion did not refer them to the sentiment of conscience, but rather served for an agreeable amusement. Thus ended the dissection of the reveries.

Erastus. A very curious Gazette!

Crito. Fortunatus told me, this scene proved as good to him as a sermon. I made no difficulty of believing him. It shews the secret aversion or opposition of the mind to all that can rectify it.

Erastus. It is easy to see, this opposition comes merely from a want of uprightness in the will; which is afraid of every thing that may shew its false. When it cannot fall on the substance of truths, it cavils about the form. Nothing is so industrious, or so fertile in inventions, as a false will, or disguising the true from one's own view and that of others. It knows how to make use of evasions and sophisms, if it unfortunately happens to stumble on some truths too simple and immoveable, it begins to shuffle the cards, and chicanery is its last shift.

Philo. You told us, Crito, that you found this Gazette in more places than one. Who, beside Fortunatus, told you this news? Did they all speak of the same scene?

Crito. No; there are other scenes which would be too long to relate: I had them from some ladies. Several people said, they were surprized that men of parts, like Crito and Philo, should give into such reveries.

I asked the first, who made me this compliment, if she had read them. No, said she; but I have heard enough of them to know their value. Among the rest, Mr. ——— a gentleman of great learning, was saying the other day, that this way of writing was not to his taste; and besides, that he did not entertain those notions.

Another gentleman, continued she, an acquaintance of yours, who passes for a wit, said, there were indeed some good things in them; but then there were many as silly. I have had it from others, who are men of erudition, that it is very evident the author is a reveur: that the pieces are a heap of mere empty words without sense. Judge now, whether I am not sufficiently informed of the contents of these reveries; and have not reason to be surprized to see Philo and you, give into them hand over head?

Let us wave this subject, said I, and talk of a thing that concerns you. You told me the other

day.

day, you designed to purchase a valuable diamond ; I have one here that will please you. Let me see it, said she. There is no necessity of that, answered I ; first give me leave to blindfold you. You are very pleasant, replied she, in putting me on making a purchase of that importance without using my eyes. You shall form a judgment of it by mine, said I. Hold there, answered she ; yours are too much prejudiced in favour of what you would dispose of.

I then asked her, whether we should stand to the judgment of the gentlemen she had been mentioning. You do not imagine I will, said she ; they understand jewels as little as they do sewing and spinning. Once more I beg, I may be allowed the use of my own eyes.

I asked her, whether she observed this conduct on all occasions. What, said she, do you think it reasonable, I should blindfold myself, in order to borrow my neighbour's eyes ? That is the fashion, replied I ; and, without going very far, I could produce you an instance of it. Here I looked at her, and smiled.

I understand your unluckiness, said she ; you would insinuate that I have judged of the reveries by the eyes of others. You are somewhat in the right ; but, in short, I considered them as learned men, better able to judge of them than I. Why then, asked I, do you not depend on them for set-

ting the value on a diamond? A pretty question, answered the lady; they have not directed their studies that way; it would be below them. Perhaps, replied I, it is not less below them to study reveries. I grant that, said she; but after all, had the question turned on what concerned me so much as the purchase of a diamond, I should not have so blindly submitted to their determination.

Do you think, said I, it is more allowable to submit blindly to the decisions of others, in regard to the true and the false, and that you run no hazard in judging of them by the sentiments of men, who may commit a thousand mistakes? You distrust my judgment in the price of a diamond, because you apprehend I am prejudiced in favour of it. Do you suppose prejudice finds no room among the learned? I know they value themselves on being free from it. Must we take their word on this occasion? Are they sufficiently acquainted with the bottom of their own hearts, to give a distinct account of the true cause of their own judgments?

That science is peculiar to reveries; it is all practical and experimental. Very much time is required for forming an adept in it. It is extremely mortifying to self-love.

If, replied she, by the study of reveries you understand the knowledge of one's self, or a long study of one's own heart; I dare not undertake to assure you that the authors, whose opinions I have produced,

duced, are well versed in it. Their studies perhaps, are of a very different kind; they cannot take in so many things at once. At that rate, answered I, we ought to be content with asking their opinion of things in which they are conversant.

Right, said she; but if I am to take no notice of what I have heard said concerning the reveries, I shall not know what to think, or say of them when they are mentioned. That is pity, answered I. Were I in your place, I should think and speak of them what a man could think and speak of what he never saw. But, said she, what if I should find myself incapable of judging of them after I had seen them? Why, then, replied I, you should give no judgment of them; but ingenuously confess your incapacity.

I never acted in this manner, said she; and nothing seems to me more difficult. The mind cannot bear to remain thus in suspense: it loves to declare itself by a yes, or a no; and has still less inclination to let others see its incapacity, or want of judgment.

We had a good deal more discourse on prejudice and the humour of deciding, which, with several persons, supplies the place of knowledge. I asked her, for instance, whether there was any demonstrative argument in saying, with an air of assurance, This is not to my taste: I do not entertain those notions: there are some good things in them;

but abundance of silly ones: they are a heap of words void of sense? It must be owned this is convincing. Here she burst out into laughter, and left me, assuring me it was without rancour.

Eraſtus. I did not expect Gazettes so material.

Philo. I think one circumstance in the first diverting; viz. that the ladies, who at first gave their opinion for examining the little niceties, could not bear to be left in possession of that employment in particular. Certainly some metamorphosis was wrought in their tastes and ideas.

Eraſtus. Metamorphoses of that kind are not uncommon. Men love to conceal themselves in the croud. Sentiments and passions are introduced among them, the bare names of which would be frightful.

Resisting the truth, not being able to allow it entrance within us, employing all our art in disguising the true, and varnishing over the false, as well as in rendering persons suspected, whose uprightness and sincerity are troublesome; this, in plain terms, is envy, double dealing, artifice, and malice. Take away the words, the reality gives no pain; on the contrary, it affords more relief than the contrary qualities.

Crito. Where is the man who could view himself one moment in this picture? I doubt those who most resemble it, will not be disposed to know themselves in it.

Eraſtus.

Eraſtus. If the originals of ſuch a picture had courage enough to own it, they would ſoon ceaſe to be like it. But the endeavours they uſe to conceal it from themſelves, ſtrengthen a doubleneſs of heart in them, which makes them impenetrable to truth. In proportion as they ſtifle the ſentiments which it produces in the conſcience, it becomes more eaſy for them to reject what may be offered without ; I mean, the teſtimony which perſons in poſſeſſion of the ſame truth may bear of it.

Crito. I remember that, among Philo's objections, which gave occaſion to the reveries, there was one which he will now find it difficult to ſolve.

Philo. I underſtand you, Crito. I was ſo complaiſant to conſcience, as to place to its account, not only ſuperſtition and fanaticiſm, but even the ſpirit of perſecution. I can now ſay, in the point of view, in which I ſee things, that nothing ſeems to me more oppoſite.

Eraſtus. Whence proceeds ſo great a change in the point of view, Philo ? Have the mature reflections, you have made on the ſubject, undeceived you ?

Philo. I have made no particular reflection on it ſince. The truth is, at the firſt glance, I ſee now things in a very different light ; and perceive that I formerly took black for white.

Eraſtus. You paſſed, however, for a man of great judgment.

Philo. And I pretended to be so; or rather, was desirous of passing for such, without appearing to pretend to that character. The word has an ill sound; the more we pretend to wit or judgment, the less we can bear being told so.

Crito. The title of judicious is generally esteemed in the world.

Erastus. The reality of it is very valuable; but I doubt whether there are many capable of distinguishing those who are really judicious, from those who have only the appearance of being so.

Philo. A man must be judicious himself, before he can determine who is or is not judicious.

Erastus. He must be so in a superior degree: as in every art, when the value of a work is to be determined, we chuse not a skilful journeyman, but an adept or master.

Crito. This is practised when arts are concerned; but it is evident, men think very differently of the subject in question. The world is full of people, who would not pretend to claim the character of judicious, and yet set up for judges of those who are so.

Erastus. I would fain ask several persons, who every moment pronounce this man is more judicious than that, by what rule they judge? In short, what is meant by being judicious, and what by being more or less so?

Philo. It seems most difficult to settle the more and the less.

Crito. And yet, every one imagines himself capable of doing that. Nothing is so common as to hear it said, this author is more judicious than that.

Erasmus. On what is the preference we give one to another commonly grounded? On a secret inclination to what pleases us most, to what contradicts us least; on our interest or natural propensities; not to say our prejudices, which are often only the consequence of them.

Philo. You here consider prejudice as a consequence of interest and inclination. I remember you told us, not long ago, that there were some persons, whose prejudices have been formed by others, and thus are become involuntary.

Erasmus. I said, there are some, whose prejudices were become almost insuperable by the disadvantageous circumstances in which they were placed. But it doth not thence follow, that all the prejudices formed in us by others, before our consent, are always involuntary. They certainly are so at first; but they afterwards become more or less voluntary, according as we have more or less the means of divesting ourselves of them.

Philo. Now I understand you, dear Erasmus. You mean that those prejudices, which at first are only the result of education, often become, at ano-

ther time, the effect of passion and interest; because entertained and strengthened by them. It is certain, that most of our prejudices would easily vanish, were they not rooted in some hidden interest. The truth is, prejudices do not pass for what they really are with those who entertain them, but for sound ideas. Interest passes still less for interest, unless it be for an interest in establishing truth, and a love of sound doctrine.

Erastus. We may say of prejudices and interest, what we just now said of the most odious passions. If those who entertain them could call them by their proper name, they would thus deprive them of their greatest force: they would not be able to subsist long, when once unmasked. But men make their own chains, by bestowing specious appellations and fine colours on the passions; and thus disguising them so long, and consequently strengthening them, they cannot afterwards disengage themselves from them.

Crito. It may always be truly said, therefore, that if a man persists in disorder, and in the false, it is because he will not see his own situation: and that knowing his situation, is the first step toward quitting it.

Erastus. It may likewise be truly said, that false judgments most commonly proceed from the false of the will; whence it follows, that those who are not yet acquainted with the false of their own will,

and

and consequently still remain in it, are not capable of forming a right judgment, and setting a value on things.

Crito. If they are not capable of forming a right judgment, they cannot be judicious.

Philo. Ergo, the first step towards becoming judicious, is to know one is not so.

Eraſtus. And, as there are very few, who do not think themselves judicious enough ; there are but very few in a condition of becoming so.

Crito. A man, who should imagine himself born a master joiner, for example, would not be willing to pass through the classes of apprentice and journeyman.

Eraſtus. I fear, that many, on quitting this life, find themselves divested of the quality of masters in the art of setting a just value on things ; and that the apprenticeship, which they must serve in the other world, will prove harder than it would have been in this.

Crito. What do you think, Eraſtus, will be the nature of such an apprenticeship in the other world ?

Eraſtus. The letters, which I have promised you, concerning the state of the dead, will explain that matter to you better than I can. In the meantime, we may form some conjecture of what that apprenticeship will be, from the small beginning of it which we experience here.

Crito.

Crito. Do you know that I was endeavouring to find out a shorter way for acquiring a right judgment, or becoming judicious, than that of uprightness of heart? Methinks that way is too long. I perceive that the heart can become upright only in proportion as it unveils itself; and this appears to me very mortifying. Self-love would be pleased with a shorter and more agreeable way.

Erasmus. Do you not know, *Crito*, that men have invented the art of making it so? Instead of studying their own hearts, taking directions from conscience concerning the secret motives on which they act, viewing distinctly the pretexts, with which they cover their intentions; in short, instead of examining the principle of their judgments, and enquiring what makes them lean one way rather than another; instead, I say, of this long and mortifying way, they have abridged the whole, and made all easy.

“ In order to acquire a right judgment, there is
 “ no necessity of practice; speculation is sufficient.
 “ By the former a man may acquire uprightness of
 “ heart: by the latter, that of the mind. These
 “ two qualities have no absolute dependence one
 “ on the other; and, as there are persons, who have
 “ an upright heart, without thinking justly; so, on
 “ the other hand, there are some, who think justly,
 “ without uprightness of heart. Ergo, in order to
 “ become judicious, we have nothing to do with
 “ conscience,

"conscience, or studying the motions of our
"hearts."

Crito. This is really the usual method of becoming judicious, or acquiring a right judgment. This way of reasoning would be generally received, was it not a little too plainly worded. For who would venture to say, in express terms, that a man's heart may be upright, though he doth not think justly: and may think justly, without having an upright heart? This maxim has somewhat grating to the ear; and several who adopt the substance, would not bear the form of it.

Erastus. I know it is not customary to express one's self so bluntly; and I rather designed to give you a practical language, than a distinct and particular one.

Crito. Every one who thinks himself judicious, flatters himself at the same time, with uprightness of heart; and if men were obliged, in discourse, to give the preference to either of those qualities, they certainly would, without hesitation, bestow it on the latter. They would even acknowledge themselves very imperfect in regard to justness of thought; but as to the heart, their uprightness is entire.

Erastus. Are we to be surprized that they willingly give the preference to uprightness of heart, in discourse? It is because they have nothing to do for acquiring it: they are already possessed of it, and with their mind as just as their heart is upright.

Thus

Thus they proceed to perfect their mind and judgment, with all possible application.

Crito. It seems therefore, dear *Eraſtus*, that you may erase out of the reasoning, you have made or supposed, that shocking maxim; that justness of thought and uprightness of heart are separable: and instead of it, advance this; that, though justness of thought and uprightness of heart are inseparable, as a man is already in possession of the latter, his business is not to labour to acquire it; but to endeavour to perfect himself in the former.

Eraſtus. Certainly this language is not so harsh as the other; and I readily agree to the exchange. It is true, it supposes the thing in question; but, after all, it is a charitable supposition, and there is no danger on that side.

Crito. But, would there be no danger, if this supposition should be false?

Eraſtus. All the danger would be, that on leaving this life, those who had falsely imagined themselves upright of heart, would have no less to discount than the man we mentioned just now; or rather, their case would be exactly the same; because it is decided, that justness of thought and uprightness of heart are inseparable.

Philo. This maxim will certainly pass for an established one; but not so well established that no farther care is to be taken, or any other steps to be made,

made, for acquiring justness of thought, than for attaining to uprightness of heart.

It will be said, the application or labour by which the judgment is formed, is one thing; and the conduct, by which a man strives to reform his heart, another. One is speculative, the other practical.

Eraſtus. This partly comes up to the reasoning, which I offered. This proposition is more specious than the maxim which Crito thought shocking.

Crito. It might be material to enquire into it a little.

Eraſtus. In the mean while, we had better enquire, whether it is not time to decamp.

Crito. I would not willingly enquire too nicely into that point; perhaps we may find we have not a moment to lose. However, we have one expedient for setting our minds at ease; each of us may put his watch back three quarters of an hour; and thus we shall have time before us.

Philo. This it is to be fertile in expedients.

Eraſtus. If you chuse to rest in illusion, I leave you all the pleasure it can give you.

Crito. It can afford none, if you will not bear us company; and I perceive the pleasure of going with you will get the better of that of deceiving ourselves. I wish it was always so.

DIALOGUE XX.

CRITO, PHILO, and ERASTUS.

Crito. **W**OULD you think I have found, in the Necromancer's Fable, an explanation of the proposition, which we wanted to be examined last night?

Erastus. Dear Philo, you every day make unexpected discoveries; and I perceive that, in return for the title of Professor of Reveries, which you have conferred on me, I ought to grant you that of Professor of Fables.

Crito. I esteem it a great honour; and Philo is required to respect me in that quality.

Philo. I will so, when Mr. Professor has given us fresh proofs of his art. We are ready to hear him.

Crito. I take it for granted, you will excuse the preliminary discourses used in entering on such an office. I have not had time to prepare myself; and besides, they would tire you.

"To come to the proposition, which we undertake to examine, by an example taken from our fable, it will be proper that the scholar, who brought it on the carpet, should repeat it. You the first; What is the proposition to be explained to-day?"

Philo

Philo. Whether the method taken for forming the mind or judgment, is different from that employed for reforming the heart?

Crito. "In the present question, the heart and the will are synonymous terms. We shall employ the latter, as more proper for explaining things. Tell me; when people undertake to judge of the disposition of a country, to measure with their eyes in a comparative way, the greater or less extent of the fields, vineyards, meadows, gardens, &c. in order to perform this well, is not one place or situation more advantageous than another?"

Philo. "Yes."

Crito. "Let us suppose two persons have the same design; that one of them is on the level ground of the said country, and the other stands on a hill; which of the two situations is more advantageous?"

Philo. "That of the top of the hill."

Crito. "In order to begin to go up this hill, must not the person have a will to do it?"

Philo. "Certainly."

Crito. "And ought he not likewise to have one for continuing his journey?"

Philo. "Yes."

Crito. "The will then must be concerned through the whole journey."

Philo. "Without doubt."

Crito.

Crito. "And are not the eyes also concerned all
"the way?"

Philo. "They are."

Crito. "Can they discover and discern objects
"as distinctly at the foot of the hill, as toward the
"top?"

Philo. "No."

Crito. "When the person in question has reach-
"ed the summit of the hill, are not the eyes com-
"manded by the will to turn more or less on this
"or that side; to view such and such objects less
"or more?"

Philo. "Yes."

Crito. "Is it in the power of the will to make
"those, who have walked only some steps, discover
"all it can make them see, who have advanced three
"quarters of the way?"

Philo. "No."

Crito. "What expedient does the will employ
"for putting the eyes in a condition of discovering
"an extent of country?"

Philo. "That of making the man walk."

Crito. "Do you not thence conclude, that, in
"proportion as this man goes on, he discovers a
"larger extent of country; and is thus put in a
"condition of forming a better judgment of ob-
"jects?"

Philo. "Without doubt."

Crito.

Crito. "Can you prove that, by any circumstance taken from the Necromancer's Narrative ?

Philo. "Because the light increaseth, as people advance in the little paths, toward the country of light.

Crito. "To leave the figure at present ; What is here meant by the eyes, or the faculty of seeing ?

Philo. "The understanding.

Crito. "What is meant by the way to be taken, for enabling the eyes to discern objects ?

Philo. "The steps of the will.

Crito. "Whither do those steps tend ?

Philo. "Toward universal truth.

Crito. "In what do they consist ?

Philo. "In complying with and obeying all the dictates of truth, delivered either by the language of conscience, or that of right reason.

Crito. "Will not one, who takes conscience and right reason for his guides, become judicious ?

Philo. "Very judicious.

Crito. "Here then is a demonstration of our proposition ; that only one way is to be taken, and the same steps are to be made, for acquiring, at the same time, both uprightness of heart and justness of thought."

Philo. No objection can be offered, and Mr. Professor is duly installed ; this catechism is better than a preliminary discourse.

Erasmus.

Erastus. I expected Mr. Professor would have examined me in my turn; and was studying for an answer.

Crito. Is it proper that Mr. Professor of reveries should appear here as a scholar?

Erastus. Why not, dear Crito? A man may be a professor in one science, and but a very young scholar in another.

Crito. I yield, Erastus: I understand that were there professors in the mechanical arts, a man might be professor in clock-making, who would be but a young scholar in the art of shoe-making.

Erastus. You thence conclude, no doubt, that you would not apply to a shoe-maker to know the value of a clock.

Crito. Neither would I apply to a clock-maker to know the value of a shoe.

Philo. Now you talk of setting a value on things, or being judicious, I recollect what gave us occasion to talk on that subject yesterday. It was the remembrance of a judicious objection, I had formerly made against the authority of conscience; I had been civil enough to place the spirit of persecution to its account; not to mention superstition and fanaticism. At present I have a difficulty to persuade myself it could ever come into my head; particularly as to what regards the spirit of persecution.

Erastus.

Eraſtus. The different point of view, in which you at preſent behold objects, ſhews you have changed your place. The will has made ſome progreſs within you toward truth. Are you to be ſurprized that your judgment is corrected by truth, in proportion to the reformation carried on in your will by the ſame truth? Your own experience is a ſtrong confirmation of what Mr. Profeſſor has been ſaying.

Crito. It is not leſs ſo of what Eraſtus demonſtrated to us the other day, concerning the diſtinction and relation between conſcience and right reaſon.

Philo. I hardly remember it.

Crito. The ſubſtance of it was, That the buſineſs of conſcience in man is to endeavour to make him upright; in order to perform that, it renders him ſenſible of his falſe, and makes him perceive the falſe of his will before it lets him ſee the falſe of his ideas.

Philo. Now I have it; and, without going very far for an inſtance, I find one in what has befallen myſelf. When I magnified in my imagination the pernicious effects reſulting from obeying conſcience, the falſe of my will was the ſpring that put reaſoning and imagination into motion, in order to give me an indifferent opinion of a method, which it was unwilling to purſue. The queen* had obtained

* See the eighteenth dialogue.

the votes of her parliament, and then the parliament demonstrated, by their council, what she wished to be persuaded of.

Eraslus. It is certain that the will has council well formed to its humour. Passion, interest, imagination and prejudice may be considered as chamber-council, who furnish reasoning, the pleading council, with notes. This council, provided with so many pieces, cannot fail of persuading her ladyship, the will, or rather of making her believe she is persuaded.

Crito. Our Necromancer, without doubt, designed to express those different advocates of their memoirs, by the different colours of the glasses.

Eraslus. That may be; and when he tells us that most of the manufacturers of the country are employed in making those glasses, there is perhaps something real in what he says.

Crito. Without leaving Europe, it appears that this manufacture is universal. It is not ranked among the mechanical arts: it is so highly dignified, that even princes take a pride in making such glasses. All, who have any degree of superiority over others, think they have a right to furnish their inferiours with them of their own making.

Pursuant to this right, princes and magistrates require their subjects to take them in civil or political affairs, and sometimes even in what regards religion. Prelates, and all ecclesiastics in general, require

require the laity to deal with them for this sort of goods.

Hence it is easy to guess that masters, preceptors, &c. furnish their disciples or scholars with them. The same may be said of parents in regard to their children; in short, all who have any ascendant over others, may oblige them to take glasses of their making.

Erastus. Among the qualities proper for giving an ascendant, wealth and titles of honour are not the least considerable. Is a man in a condition of advancing the fortune of others, his glasses immediately come into vogue; he reasons justly. He approves of a new book, every one is for buying it, before he knows what it contains.

Crito. The same effect is produced by a great reputation for learning; but, after all, wealth, titles, and reputation have an ascendant over the generality of mankind, only by their relation to the chamber-council, or the notes prepared by them.

Prejudice produces a piece on the universal reputation of some great man: interest produces several on the advantages which may accrue from his approbation: imagination is a kind of microscope for shewing all his fine qualities; and the passions are sufficiently justified by the unanimous votes of the other counsellors.

But, all things rightly considered, it will appear that this gentleman, so famous for his merit, his

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rank,

rank, his wealth, his great genius, &c. was mistaken when he imagined he had an ascendant over the minds of his neighbours; his merit was no more than a pretext for putting in play the passions, prejudice, and self-interest of his admirers.

Erastus. Could not the same council shew the other side of the medal, according to the turn given by Mr. Interest, first chamber-council?

Crito. Nothing more easy. Supposing the same person an antagonist, prejudice immediately draws up a memorial, setting forth that people of merit are disabused in regard to their esteem for him. Imagination, in quality of a microscope, places to view faults so much more considerable as they were before imperceptible. Interest and the passions unite in composing pieces of the utmost force; which will admit of no answer. The pleading counsellor has nothing to do but to work them up, and give them a new lustre with his rhetoric and eloquence.

Erastus. At that rate, would not the same person appear on one side of the medal in the form of a hero, and on the other in that of a devil?

Philo. I imagine that neutral persons, who should know that man only by these opposite representations, would be very much puzzled to determine which of the two was most like him.

Crito. I farther imagine that neutral persons supposing them judicious, would not undertake to determine

determine which piece came nearest to an original, unknown to them. They might indeed form a judgment on the report of others; but then they ought to be well assured that none of the counsellors is concerned in the affair. Even supposing those, with whom they deal, too honest to receive pieces drawn up by interest and the passions, would they be guarded against taking those composed by prejudice?

Erastus. Honest men of that turn of mind are as scarce and valuable as the neutral people, who are to distinguish them. Rather let us say, that men of this sort are the only persons capable of being truly neutral.

Could the heart be laid open, we should see that men incline to one or the other side, only by their affinity to those several counsellors, and the memorials they receive from them. Even good men are not exempt from this frailty in a certain degree; and if they are less subject to it than the generality of mankind, it is only because they are better acquainted with themselves in that point, or have a greater diffidence in regard to the secret springs, which the passions or prejudice may put into motion. How many men, in general, pretend to a neutrality, who have not the shadow, or even idea, of it?

Philo. Methinks the idea of neutrality ought to suppose that of uprightness.

Eraslus. It is perhaps uprightness itself in the most eminent degree. I speak of an entire and universal neutrality, almost as hard to be found among men, as the phenix in its kind; for as to certain particular neutralities, they are to be ranked in another class; and it is easy to meet with some of that kind in certain cases, where the memorials of the counsellors could not be admitted. Not to speak of this sort, which is of no great value; true neutrality ought to have an infinity of degrees: its apprenticeship is long: the most real is that which makes us most sensible of the difficulty of attaining it.

Philo. Neutrality is not less esteemed in the world than the quality of judicious; I should imagine, that, taking the matter right, one is not very different from the other.

Eraslus. The several names given to whatever is good and beautiful, are universally esteemed.

Never any man pretended to disapprove of good as such, nor approve of evil, as evil. We are induced to reject good, and receive evil, only by the different colours, with which each of them is disguised.

But while men openly reject the reality of good, they preserve the name of it with the utmost jealousy, frequently appearing in the opposite parties, has given being to wars of all kinds.

Some

Some have been carried on, under pretence of maintaining truth : others under that of doing justice ; and right has always been on both sides. In a word, from the greatest states down to the most diminutive, that is, each private family, division has been justified by the specious names of truth, equity, right. &c. words well worth preserving.

And as men of penetration have been very sensible, that in order to distinguish what is just, right, equitable, &c. a person ought to be judicious ; they have expressed all the esteem for that appellation, which it deserves ; every one reproaching his adversaries with not being able to distinguish the true, the right, the just, &c. because they are not judicious.

And, as others, still more penetrating, have discovered that it is impossible to be judicious without being neuter ; neutrality has been canonized. Every one values himself on that disposition ; and at the same time charges all of the opposite party with being strangers to it. In short, when terms only are in question, men are passionately fond of the true, the just, the equitable. Do not tell them of persons who are prejudiced, obstinate, partial, &c. In order to become judicious, say they, a man must be perfectly neuter. This language is common ; but the reality not so.

Philo. I should think real neutrality can never take place, while interest has a voice in the judg-

ments we form; because neutrality is the same as the equilibrium; and the slightest interest would be able to turn the scale.

Eraustus. Judge therefore, dear Philo, how far we have to travel in the knowledge of ourselves, before we can be in a condition to judge rightly, or give things their just value; since all right judgment is founded on neutrality, or an equilibrium, and this equilibrium is formed only in proportion as the heart is weaned from the passions, and all private interest.

Crito. At that rate, who will pretend to be perfectly neuter? Not Crito.

Eraustus. Some time ago, Philo would not have failed of applying that character to Eraustus.

Philo. I should be very cautious of doing it now. I have suffered too much on the like occasions. Besides, to tell you the truth, I cannot be so generous, as I once was, in bestowing perfections or heroical qualities. I then gave them away, without any trouble to myself; at present I should be apprehensive of injuring truth by my liberality.

Eraustus. You make me a compliment which would not go down with all the world. Where would be the danger, Philo, in your bestowing on me some qualities which I have not, at the expence of truth?

Philo. You will oblige me to speak, Eraustus. But, to let you see, I have not so soon forgot my
lesson,

lesson, I answer, that it would be dangerous both for you and for me. A word to the wife.

Erastus. This comes of not rightly understanding one's own interest. I have given you lessons, which you turn against me, by esteeming me less than you would otherwise have done. Were it not for that, you would have given me some qualities, which I must now be content to want. You would have made me judicious, and consequently entirely neuter.

It is true; after you had bestowed that quality on me, it would have been in your power to divest me of it again; I should have lain at your mercy in that point; but, in the mean time, I should have been in possession of something.

Philo. That is sufficient for setting a value on the advantageous opinion others may entertain of us.

Crito. You may say what you please, Philo; and as much a lawyer as you are, you will make no great progress in disabusing men in that point. They are resolved to pass for persons of merit, for persons of an upright heart, and a just way of thinking. Whether they are really so or no, is not the question. It is always good to suppose they are. A good reputation can do no harm; so much the worse for them, if they do not deserve the character; they must endeavour to make it their due.

Erastus. It is pity I did not learn this lesson sooner; you would then have had more advantageous notions of me. I ought indeed to have endeavoured to deserve them. But what art is here understood? What I would fain learn, is, perhaps, a compendious art, calculated for saving me much trouble. It would be worth while to be acquainted with it: But we will reserve the explication of it for to-morrow.

D I A L O G U E XXI.

CRITO, PHILO, and ERASTUS.

Erastus. **W**ILL Crito be pleased to tell us, what is the art, by which a man may endeavour to merit the good reputation he has already acquired, without deserving it?

Crito. Before I pretend to instruct you in that art, I ought to be well versed in it myself; and as I borrowed what I said of it yesterday from a certain person, I thought I ought to have recourse to the same author for the explication. With that view, I went to him early this morning; and the conversation turned of itself on the point in question. He repeated his former arguments; I at present wave the repetition of them. I begged of him to explain what he meant by those words, endeavour-
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ing to merit the good reputation, one had already acquired, without deserving it. He told me it was labouring to acquire uprightness of heart and a just way of thinking. I then asked him, whether he looked on this as the work of a few days? Whereupon he replied, that, on the contrary, he was of opinion it would require much time.

The man in question, then, said I, will find it a laborious task to merit the reputation, which he has acquired, without deserving it; or, to speak more properly, which he has usurped; for all unjust possessions are really so many usurpations. He did not disagree with me.

Thereupon I asked him, whether the least degree of uprightness doth not require us to restore what we possess unjustly? A pleasant question! said he. That is the first step towards it. Which, continued I, is reckoned the greater good in the world; the reputation of integrity and judgment, or the possession of some hundreds of pistoles? Can any man make the comparison? said he. None but those who are slaves to avarice, are capable of giving the pistoles the preference.

Would you not, replied I, look on a man, who should unjustly possess an hundred louis-d'ors, and refuse to make restitution, as one void of uprightness? Is that a question? said he. How then, asked I, ought he to be called, who should unjustly possess the reputation of an upright and judicious man,

without being willing to part with it? Would you stile him just or unjust? Unjust, replied he.

Is injustice a good, or an evil? said I. He readily pronounced it an evil. Is not what is an evil, hurtful? replied I. Very hurtful, continued he.

Agree with me then, answered I, that a good reputation, unjustly acquired, may be hurtful; and that if we are obliged to endeavour to deserve it, we ought to begin with, as much as in us lies, those whom we may have deceived by false appearances.

Here my gentleman had nothing to answer; and was obliged to own, that a reputation established on the false, could not be good. However, to have something to say, he added, that several would not understand how to go to work in this affair of disabusing the public; they would enquire whether they were to make proclamation, &c.

I observed to him, that this objection carried us a little out of the question, which was, Whether a reputation established on the false, ought to be considered as a good or not? The business at present is rather to know what we are to think, than what we are to do. But as a different way of thinking must necessarily have an influence over the conduct, it is natural that the language should favour of it; and that a man, for example, whose maxims have imposed on others, should disabuse them.

Uprightness produces a love for truth. As soon as a man loves truth, he loves it both in regard to himself

himself and his neighbour; and is thereby obliged to disabuse him of all the false he may have occasioned in his ideas, and even in his conduct. Here we were interrupted, and the discourse ended.

Erastus. I hate those impertinents, Crito; methinks you were going on finely. There is hardly any subject on which men commit more mistakes, than that of reputation, well or ill acquired; though it be grounded on the false, it is still good in their opinion. They do not observe that they thus call an unjust thing a good, because they are unacquainted with the close relation between the false and the unjust, as likewise between uprightness and truth.

Crito. Here is a remark to be made. Reproach a man with considering an unjust thing as a good, he will deny the charge with some indignation. Give the affair another turn, and ask him whether he doth not seek to be esteemed more than he deserves, he will own he does; for men do not comprehend that whatever is founded on the false is unjust, and that whatever is unjust derives its origin from the false.

Philo. I should like to see that thesis explained; that is a task for a professor.

Crito. Do you direct your discourse to Crito? I beg you will be pleased to remember, he is only Professor of Fables; and that a thesis of this nature ought to fall under the cognizance of Mr. Professor of Reveries. It was to him I proposed it;

and I must confess I deserve to be laughed at for starting a thesis, which I am incapable of explaining thoroughly.

Erastus. No doubt, you send the ball back to me. Take notice that it is not the business of a reveur, gravely to undertake the explanation of a proposition. Should he attempt that task, he would acquit himself of it much like the ass with the doctor's cap.

Crito. I think, however, that this reveur sometimes manages a subject pretty well.

Erastus. If so, it is certainly by chance. He never learnt the art of reasoning: he is a stranger to all method; and it is not without reason that he is accused of being no logician.

Philo. You are one, however, *Erastus*; just as those who have never learnt to fence, know how to use their swords on occasion. Methinks, though you have not learnt the art of reasoning, you understand how to handle an argument.

Erastus. Do you think, *Philo*, my arguments, when taken to pieces and reduced to form, are always the most just? I do not offer them as such. I advise you to be on your guard. I perceive this compliment doth not hit your taste; and that you would ask me where something of certainty may be found.

Philo. You enter into my thoughts, *Erastus*; and I know some, who, on hearing you talk in this manner,

manner, would believe you in great danger of falling into an error. If, say they, you are not assured that your best arguments are free from mistakes, how can you be certain of having discovered the truth by such arguments?

Erastus. This might be a proper question, did I make that use of reasoning which they imagine. I should call this, putting the cart before the horse. In natural things, we reason on what we see and perceive; but do not see or perceive the consequences of such reasoning.

Thus, for example, the bare sense of smelling informs me, there are pinks and tuberoses in this parterre. I see them at one glance of the eye. I then reason on what I see and smell; thence I judge of their different qualities, of the season when they were planted, of the manner in which they have been cultivated, and how long they may continue.

In the same manner I reason, when I would unfold a truth, of which an attention to right reason has given me a glimpse; not with a view of determining by argument, concerning the dictates of right reason,

Hence it is easy to discover the difference between reasoning and right reason. Right reason ought to be the principle of reasoning; but reasoning can never be the principle of right reason: because to make an argument just, it must be established on the right rule, without which it never will

will be right. If so, all reasoning independent of the same rule is false. If it is false, how can it lead to what is true, or serve as a principle to right reason?

Philo. May it not be said that the multitude of contrary arguments, with which the world is overrun, comes from the same source? Men have undertaken to make their way to right reason by arguing, instead of taking right reason for the principle of their arguments.

Hence it is, that, in opposite parties, those who are most dextrous in the art of reasoning, have only made the division wider; every one chuses some particular way of reasoning, for his principle, which serves as a foundation to an infinity of others.

Erastus. At the same time, every one pretends that right reason is the only principle of his reasoning; this is evident from experience. What is one, cannot occasion division; but what is one, is simple; and right reason is but little known in its simplicity, which is the essence of it; and by that alone it is invariably right, and exempt from all contrariety and mistakes. In a word, should it cease to be simple, it would no longer be right reason.

Philo. And that, if I am not mistaken, because primitive truth is simple, and right reason is only a ray or emanation of that truth.

Crito. If right reason is simple, it is universal; if universal, all men ought to have a right, or be in a condition to consult it.

Eraslus. All men have a right to consult right reason; but very few have the dispositions requisite for so doing. Neutrality, or an equilibrium, is the basis of it: this equilibrium is formed only by the uprightness of the will, a freedom from passion and prejudice which turned the scale on their side.

Before the will can be free from the passions and prejudices to which it is a slave, it must feel the power they have over it. In order to perceive that, it must allow conscience to speak, to unveil its hidden motives, and lay open its most secret intentions.

This is the business of conscience, which corrects the false of the will only by shewing it; and the will becomes upright only, so far as it consents to see that false such as it is, and no longer seeks for pretences to justify it.

This is the first step the will makes in uprightness, it thus enters the beginning of the equilibrium; and though that cannot be complete so long as prejudice and passion subsist, it takes place, in some degree, when the will mistrusts their suggestions, and refuses to listen to them.

This beginning of an equilibrium enables us, in some measure, to hear the dictates of right reason; and the language of right reason takes place in proportion,

portion, as that of prejudice, interest and passion loses ground.

When the latter is ever so little listened to, it, by its diffusion and multiplicity, produces a noise and an emotion, which fills the whole capacity of the understanding; so that it can no longer distinguish the simple language of right reason. If we pretend to form an argument, while in such a disposition, it will be raised on the language of passion, prejudice, or self-interest; and how specious soever it may appear, it can never be just.

The conclusion is easy; that an argument is more or less just, as the will is more or less upright.

Crito. It may likewise be concluded, that, before a man can reason justly, he must be willing to be thoroughly acquainted with his most secret intentions, and the most hidden springs of the judgments he forms.

Erastus. And what can penetrate through so many covers? Shall it be reasoning? But they are made by reasoning itself, with the colours it gives to illusion. We have already seen that reason can be just, only in proportion as the doublings of the heart are unfolded. How shall we reconcile this?

I would fain know whether the discovery of our most secret intentions is to be effected by a just, or by a false way of reasoning. It will be replied, that this must be performed by just reasoning. But, then,

then, how can it be just, if a man is unacquainted with the secret springs that may form it; or with the pretexts drawn over his intentions, in order to dress them up in fine colours? At that rate, it must be said that reasoning ought to be just, before it can possibly be so.

Philo. This is an explanation of what was said in the letters on conscience, concerning the authority it ought to be allowed over reasoning; and shews that that authority doth not abolish the due use of reasoning, much less that of right reason.

Crito. Might not this likewise explain the paradox, almost universally received in the world? I speak of the different manners in which men reason, where their own interest is not concerned, and where prejudice and interest may have some share. In this point, those who are best versed in the art of exact reasoning, differ so much from themselves, that one cannot be enough surprized at it.

Eraslus. This indeed is the knot of the question. It cannot be denied that men of a certain genius commonly reason justly, where they are neuter. In a point of law, for example, they will be sufficiently capable of distinguishing what is just from what is unjust. So likewise in natural things, particularly in what we call mathematical truths, they reason very justly.

But

But the case is widely different wherever their passions are interested, and in every thing proper for justifying or unveiling them.

Here religion comes in, which concerns the whole world. But where shall we find men truly neuter in regard to religion? I know not whether there is any case where neutrality is harder to be met with.

Philo. Men are indeed concerned on a thousand considerations to look at religion in a certain point of view. Every one sees what he has a mind to see, when he doth not mistrust the hidden principles, which may determine his judgment.

Eraustus. Those secret principles, those fine springs, which put the whole machine into motion, without being perceived, cannot be discovered, but by the simple language of conscience.

This active language, without entering into particulars, makes a man sensible how false the motives are, on which he pretends to proceed. Were it allowed to go farther, it would, on particular occasions, let him see what makes him incline more to one side than to another. It would plainly shew the real bottom of the intention, of that pretended good intention, which is no more than a pretext, with which the true intention is disguised.

Crito. Men do not care to go too deep in such enquiries. The most penetrating understanding is here quite blind; so that it must be owned that
penetration

penetration is not employed in these points. Let it be used without, as much as you please, in the most difficult sciences; the knowledge of what passes in the inmost recesses of men's own hearts, is of less importance.

Philo. Or rather, it would give them too much mortification; they would not purchase the character of being judicious so dearly.

Erastus. You are mistaken, *Philo.* They are not in the humour of quitting that character; and though they do not deserve it on that score, they may on several other accounts.

Crito. You mean, *Erastus*, that they may be very judicious in every thing, which doth not fall under the cognizance of conscience.

Erastus. If you please, *Crito*, you may add, and in every thing, where they are not interested either directly or indirectly. I here speak of those whom you suppose always without themselves, and consequently but little attentive to the secret springs which determine their actions.

It is no hard matter to comprehend that persons of this sort, having no good information of what passes within themselves, cannot distinguish the language of passion or interest from that of right reason. In all other respects they may be allowed the title of judicious; and there are few people who are not less or more so in their respective professions, when they have applied to them seriously.

Philo.

Philo. For the same reason, if men applied themselves heartily to the study of what passes within themselves, they would soon become judicious in those things which fall under the cognizance of conscience, and in every thing in general, where religion is concerned.

Eraustus. You go on a great pace, dear *Philo*. In order to be judicious, wherever religion is concerned, a man must have made a considerable progress in the study of himself, in that uprightness and disinterestedness, which form the equilibrium, and without which he can be judicious only in a narrow and limited manner: there is an extreme distance from the first degree of the equilibrium, to that entire equilibrium, by which a man is enabled to distinguish the true from the false in all regards, and set a just value on every thing.

Philo. You see, *Eraustus*, that I reason like a young scholar, who is not thoroughly acquainted with the nature of a work: the business is soon done in his imagination. I understand that, with a beginning of uprightness, a man may be judicious enough for himself to discern by the sentiment of conscience, and an attention to right reason, the just and the true in relation to himself, and what he ought to admit or reject. But how far is it from this point to that distinct and universal view, which can only be the effect of an entire equilibrium. On that

that foot, the poor young scholar, Erastus, will have much work cut out, before he reaches it.

Erastus. Let us shake hands on that article, Philo; and though you have been pleased to honour me with the character of Professor of Reveries, I own myself still a young scholar, in regard to the disposition in question.

Crito. It is not long since, I should have been tempted to call Erastus a very judicious man in all respects.

Erastus. You would then have had the pleasure of shewing yourself very judicious; as you would have been capable of judging Erastus such in all respects.

Crito. It happens luckily for us both, that we are excused giving one another the lie in an obliging manner. Each of us ought to be believed on his word, how much soever he may speak to his own disadvantage.

Philo. From this time, there is no danger that either of us will be inclined to exaggerate.

Erastus. This is another advantage resulting from the bargain we have made; exaggeration being extremely opposite to a just way of thinking.

Crito. I was just now thinking of the discourse, I told you we had last night concerning reputation. Methinks Erastus has hitherto omitted nothing, that might undeceive us of the too advantageous ideas we might entertain of him. I know some,
who

who would think in a different manner, and tell us, that in order to give more weight to the truths he is explaining, we ought to conceive a more exalted idea of his merit and judgment.

Erastus. This is laying the interest of truth to heart. On this foot, you need only dress me in those fine qualities, which I have given up; and then all I can say to you will be of a very different value. You will immediately consider me as a model for your imitation: your ideas will be moulded in mine; and you will become faithful copies of so perfect an original.

This it is to be able to do honour to truth by the universal reputation a man has acquired. The question does not turn at present on the private advantage that may be reaped from such a reputation; but on the interest of truth, which is supported by it.

Crito. We ought to admit nothing in our power for procuring so desirable a good.

Erastus. Our reason ought to run thus: "Truth is the greatest of all goods: all that can contribute to its being received by other men, is consequently a good. Reputation is of that class: it gives weight to truth, and serves to do it honour. Ergo, Reputation ought to be esteemed as the greatest of goods."

Philo. This is a demonstrative argument, especially when employed by the chamber-council.

Erastus

Erastus shall unfold the consequences of it more at large.

Erastus. That shall be done to-morrow, if you please. It is time to break up the assembly for the present.

D I A L O G U E XXII.

CRITO, PHILO, and ERASTUS.

Philo. **W**ELL then; it was determined last night, that reputation is the greatest of goods; since it is the means for doing honour to truth. This being once allowed, I know not how Erastus can justify his own conduct. He has hitherto taken a contrary method. He seemed yesterday inclined to act differently, when he observed to us, that his arguments might want justness, and advised us to be on our guard in that point.

Crito. It must be acknowledged, Erastus, that, after such warning, your arguments will not have such weight with us, except for the interest of truth, you take care to restore them to their former reputation.

Erastus. But, supposing the interest of truth, and the credit of my arguments, should chance to be two distinct things?

Philo.

Philo. Why should they be considered so, Erastus? Have your arguments any other tendency, than that of setting truth in a proper light?

Erastus. And supposing that, instead of placing truth in a proper light, they should only obscure and confine it.

Crito. That is not your design, Erastus.

Erastus. Most certainly it is not, Crito. And, to convince you that I am a stranger to such a disposition, I wish you would consider truth as entirely independent of my arguments. Thus it will be out of the reach of all I can say for confining and obscuring it.

This was the end of all I may have said to make you mistrust them; and I think the love of truth requires that, if I cannot be serviceable to it by my arguments, I should, at least, avoid injuring it by them, and apprise my friends of the value they ought to set on them.

Philo. This is a way of having the interest of truth at heart, which I should not have thought of.

Crito. We were much out in our reckoning, I perceive. We imagined that the interest of truth required Erastus should make his arguments valuable; whereas, on the contrary, he shews us that the love of truth requires he should discredit his own arguments, that it may not in the least suffer by their want of justness.

Philo.

Philo. At that rate, he would prove that the interest of truth has no connection with that of his reputation. Whence it would follow, that reputation being no longer a proper means for doing honour to truth, it ought not to be esteemed as the greatest of goods.

Reconcile yourself to yourself, dear Erastus; or at least, reconcile the contrarieties in your way of reasoning.

Erastus. This shews what value you ought to set on it, since it is self-contradictory. One side must certainly be false.

Philo. Let us know, Erastus, on which of the two we are to depend.

Erastus. Should I tell you that, Philo, you would judge of them by my eyes; and I think it is your interest to make use of your own in this case.

Philo. Well, Crito; to which of the two arguments shall we give the preference? To that which maintains that the interest of truth requires a man should support his reputation, and the justness of his reasoning; or to that which, on the contrary, maintains that the greatest interest of truth requires he should consider it as entirely independent of any one's arguments and reputation?

Crito. How shall we begin the enquiry? Shall we dissect each particular term? Shall we give each

of those arguments all the different forms of which they may be susceptible?

Philo. Rather, Crito, let us first enquire which of the two is most to our taste, and which ought to carry the prize. After that, we will bestow a form on it that shall fully demonstrate it.

Crito. This is hitting the mark, and understanding one's own interest at the same time. But, methinks *Philo* and I have played the comedians sufficiently for to-day; and that the parts we have acted may give us occasion for serious discourse.

Philo. In the mean time our Professor of Reveries seemed to take no notice of us; but though he put on a grave face, I could see him laugh in his sleeve.

Eraſtus. I had a mind to see how long the scene would last; and found it too instructive to interrupt it.

Crito. It may serve to shew that the art of reasoning is of great use for demonstrating all a man desires should be true.

Eraſtus. Reasoning might likewise be employed by those who have discovered the true, in order to explain it to others.

Philo. But how shall it be known who have discovered the true? All arguments wear the appearance of it; and yet the most specious are frequently the most false.

Eraſtus.

Eraſtus. And thoſe which are moſt juſt in ſubſtance, may eaſily be defective in form. I think, after all, that the queſtion muſt be decided by the uprightness of thoſe who make them, and that of thoſe who examine them.

Crito. I imagine ſuch as make uſe of reaſoning, only with a view of explaining the true, do not make choice of the moſt compound arguments. The true ought to have in itſelf an evidence far ſuperior to what art can produce.

Eraſtus. Neither the compoſition nor ſubtilty of arguments, are prejudices in favour of the uprightness of the diſputant. It is the common ſhift of ſuch as fear a ſtrong light, both for ſeeing others and themſelves.

This might be termed throwing duſt in a man's eyes; were not the compariſon of the glaſſes more ſignificative on this occaſion. Duſt thrown into the eyes incommodates or dazzles them, without diſguiſing the objects. The glaſſes produce a more agreeable effect; they magnify or diminish the objects at the ſame time that they colour them. Such is the effect of ſubtile and compound arguments.

Arguments of this kind are either employed for explaining the true; or have a tendency to varniſh over the falſe. If the latter, we may thereby judge of their value: if the former, they are fitter for obſcuring than demonſtrating the true.

Compound arguments ought to be suspected on all accounts; if they are not pernicious, at least, they are superfluous. They may be ranked among that multitude of words, which Solomon considers as contrary to uprightness. Simplicity is inseparable from uprightness; if it is not one and the same thing.

Philo. This is certainly the sense of the words of the gospel: If thine eye is simple, thy whole body will be enlightened.

Eraſtus. The evil eye, which is opposed to it, in like manner signifies the disposition of one who squints or looks aside; one who will not see things as they are; in short, one who fears day-light, and winks with his eyes to avoid the sight of it.

Crito. This is evident to the sense; and I am persuaded that every man has more or less experience of it. I can speak of my own in this case. I am sensible I have a thousand times reasoned with design of dazzling myself, and defending myself against a certain *Je ne ſçai quoi* that condemned me. At other times, I have multiplied arguments to disguise certain truths, which I was unwilling to admit, and conceal from my own view the secret principle which prompted me to reject them.

Philo. This has long been my case in regard to what Eraſtus said on conscience and sincerity. I asked him for explications, one after another; but still some obscurity remained, some difficulty was still

still unresolved. He would have served me very rightly, had he only answered me with the common proverb, No one is so deaf, as he who will not hear.

I must tell you one thing, which served me as a pretext for resisting what I perceived but too true. When Erasmus gave us to understand that conscience was his only master, I imagined he admitted its voice, exclusive of that of right reason. All he said of reasoning, I applied to right reason; and could not conceive how conscience alone could teach all Erasmus told us he had learnt in his school.

Erasmus. I must own I have been all along very careless in the choice of my terms, or the manner of expressing myself.

I have acted somewhat like a man, who, shewing the key of a closet adorned with valuable paintings, should say that key gave him the privilege of seeing them. It would easily be understood, however, that he could not see them without opening his eyes, and without the assistance of the light.

When I was speaking of the school of conscience, in my letters or reveries, I ought to have said, that I considered conscience, or uprightness in obeying it, as the key of true knowledge, as the introduction to all truth; only the term right reason was wanting; the reality of it was sufficiently implied.

Philo. You remind me, *Erastus*, that in the same place, mention is made of the equilibrium, as an effect of the same uprightness: that by this equilibrium, the false in ideas, or opinions, insensibly falls to the ground; that by it we are better enabled to discern the true.

I know not where my eyes were, when I did not see that the whole ended in right reason. But I was like those scholars, who must be questioned in the very terms of their catechism, and are quite lost when put out of that road.

Crito. How many scholars, who go not to school, are on the same foot! Present the true to them, divested of certain terms, which they look on as sacred, they are at a stand; they exclaim against heresy and innovation. Give them back the same terms without the things, and they are pacified. This is the sound doctrine, to which they are to stick fast.

Erastus. I acknowledge that a reveur like me would be violently suspected by men so regular in terms. One while he would be charged with heresy; another, with false reasoning, with contradicting himself, and having no regular method and system. Ought this to be matter of surprize? A reveur never was systematical; he thinks without method, and reasons in the same manner; so that he will not undertake to warrant the justness of his thoughts and arguments; he leaves his friends to judge

judge of that. Nor will he answer for heresy; as he is not infallible, he is not secure from error.

Crito. Here Mr. Professor of Reveries leads us into a fine labyrinth.

Erastus. I am doing just the contrary, dear Philo; and were you in one, the warnings I have given you would be proper for leading you out of it.

Philo. Do you call this leading us out of it; when you are making us distrust both your arguments, and the very things, which seemed to us most evident?

Erastus. By teaching you to distrust my arguments, I take nothing from the evidence of things. I leave you room to see it in itself, independent of my arguments. Thus you are freed from the slavery of turns and expressions, calculated rather for cramping, than demonstrating the truth.

You are placed in a condition of daring to view it in a simple and unlimited manner, suitable to what it is in its simple and universal origin.

Hence you may descend to distinct or particular truth, consider what is essential in each of them, and how they are relative on one side to simple truth, and on the other to intelligent creatures.

You may likewise distinguish among particular truths, such as are more accessory or more foreign to primitive truth; such as have had a beginning,

and must cease to be of use, after they have served as indirect means for conducting men to truth. Of this sort are the historical facts, and an infinity of particular circumstances contained in the scripture, as so many testimonies which truth bears of itself.

You will view those truths in as simple a manner as the nature of each will permit. By considering them in their principle, in their end, and in their use, you will strip them of all the borrowed forms with which opinion has clothed, not to say disguised, them.

You will venture to think on this subject, without framing your ideas on those of others. You will not dismiss the idea of the true or evidence, when it shall offer itself, under pretence that some able men have thought differently, or perhaps have proved the contrary by methodical arguments.

By an effect of the same liberty, you will no longer measure the true by your old measures, by your former ideas, which you once employed as a rule for limiting or rejecting what went beyond them.

The first degrees of the equilibrium, into which you will enter by the first degrees of uprightness, will not allow you to consult your own private interest, or listen to prejudice, when the question turns on distinguishing the true from the false.

On the same principle of uprightness, inseparable from simplicity, you will desire to know, only

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in order to obey. As you make greater progress in neutrality, or the equilibrium, you will be in a condition of knowing all things more distinctly.

In the mean time, you will mistrust the badness of your sight, and become judicious, more by suspending than by passing your judgment. You will be content with judging of what you certainly know, and that only when it is absolutely necessary you should determine on a choice.

Is this carrying you into a labyrinth, Crito? For my part, I might justly charge you with throwing me into my reveries again by your labyrinth. You have now had a sample of them.

Crito. No reproaches, I beseech you, good *Eraustus*. You shall not have one word more of the labyrinth; your reveries of this day have taught us the secret of getting out of it; and I even defy you yourself to entangle us in one hereafter, so that we shall not be able to get out of it by the help of the key you have given us.

Eraustus. My design was to guard you against the false which my arguments might occasion, as well as what might come from any other quarter. In this view, I declared I wanted nothing I might have said to you.

I thought I did you a friendly office, by engaging you, in my turn, not to see things with the eyes of other men; to consider them in their substance, and independent of their form; to mistrust

trust the too favourable prejudice you might entertain of me, and which might as effectually impose on you as the contrary prejudice.

Philo. Pray, Crito, how shall we call this art of indulging reveries without art, by which Erasmus has, in a few minutes, run over the substance of all that has hitherto been said in our walks?

Crito. It would be much easier for us to give it a name, Philo, than to make a proper advantage of it. Nothing is so agreeable, in the point of view, as this universal plan, free from all systems, or particular plans. Nothing is so agreeable to good sense, as to venture to consider the true in itself, independent of the different forms, with which the opinions of men have disguised it. Nothing is so beautiful as a neutrality or equilibrium, which alone can put us in a condition of forming a sound judgment of things.

This is the difficult point. It is easy to perceive the necessity of such a disposition; to comprehend that, without the equilibrium, we shall always incline to one side: but it is not so easy to understand ourselves well in that particular.

Philo. You are in it, Crito.

Crito. How, Erasmus! Do you say I am in the equilibrium?

Erasmus. Not quite, as to the reality; though you have the first degrees of it. I mean, you entertain

tertain just ideas of the difficulty of knowing one's self in that point.

Philo. I was listening with all my ears, to know what surprising flight Crito had taken, to get into the equilibrium at once. I had flattered myself with not being very far from it. But he is brought down from his elevation, and consequently, I too am humbled in the same manner.

Crito. I was examining myself how I travelled thither. Erastus would not perhaps have found it a difficult task to persuade me I am at my journey's end; and who knows whether, not being able to give any tolerable account of my manner of travelling, I might not have imagined it done in my sleep? Judge now, dear Erastus, how much credit your suffrage might have with me.

Philo. Let us judge from this, Crito, of our propensity to enter into what pleases us. Should we be so honest and credulous on the other side of the question? I am afraid that Erastus's suffrage would lose ground, if Mr. Interest was concerned in the matter.

Crito. Hold; let us not touch on that string. This is too tender a point among friends. What have we to do with Mr. Interest? He is out of the present question. We are talking of neutrality, and the equilibrium; and are not to suppose he can give his voice there.

Erastus. A very good thought. This now is the way to soar up immediately into a perfect neutrality. When we are once come to think that private interest can have no influence over us in regard to most opinions which we espouse, it plays its part, without being perceived, and consequently much more to its own advantage. The less we suspect the private inclinations which may determine our judgment, the less we think ourselves capable of prejudice and partiality. Thus it is easy to think ourselves in the equilibrium; imagination transports us thither; it gives us a beautiful representation of that situation; the colours are at its command.

Crito. And perhaps while the imagination is playing so fine a part, Mr. Interest plays his privately, when we least suspect it. In good earnest, I find this is but too much the case; and if I knew my self better, I might say more on that subject.

Philo. I know several, who would not understand what relation interest can have to ideas or opinions. They would have taken what Crito just now said on that point very seriously; and have thought it judicious not to confound things so unlike. Besides, a man loves to find his work done; and it is more easy to banish interest in imagination, than to venture to inquire what credit it has with us, and endeavour to oppose it in good earnest.

Erastus.

Erasmus. Men are naturally inclined to inquire into the causes of what offers itself. They take a pleasure in discovering its hidden springs. As soon as some artfully contrived machine appears on the stage, all ingenious persons are immediately employed in finding out the secret. They do not stop at what strikes the eye; they must know all the particulars.

As for discovering the springs, which put the whole machine within themselves into motion, that is not of so much importance; it is sufficient that they know the outside, and judge of it by what others think of it, or, perhaps, what they seem to think of it themselves. After all, it may be supposed that a good effect must necessarily proceed from a good cause. Is not this a way of reasoning that admits of no reply?

Crito. Certainly.

Erasmus. Let us see whether we may not find some objection against it. Every good effect must proceed from a good cause. We judge water to be good at the spring, when it is so in the stream. But the case is not the same in moral things. In order to know whether an effect is good or not, we must first examine the cause; since the whole value of the effect is taken from the cause which produces it. So that here we may alter our thesis, and say, We must judge of the effects by the cause, and not of the cause by the effects.

Crito.

Crito. At that rate, every one would have no small discount to make, especially persons of merit; I mean, the actors of the wise world. I very much doubt whether they would be inclined to judge of themselves in this manner. They would stick to the old thesis, and, without the least hesitation, judge that so many fine and good effects, so generally esteemed, can proceed only from a good cause. This is making short work.

Erastus. This would be convenient enough, was not the reckoning to be set right in the other world; where, perhaps, the mistake will prove more fatal than in this.

Philo. I already perceive, by what I have experienced of the matter, that this misreckoning is a serious affair. Nothing mortified me more, than to see so many fine qualities vanish, which I had, through mistake, ascribed to others. I was accustomed to conceal the bottom of my own intentions from myself, by that pretended good intention, which Erastus mentioned yesterday. I took that superficial intention for the true principle of my actions; and was highly delighted with myself on being well regulated, not only exteriorly, but also interiorly, by the good intention, which attended my whole conduct. Judge now, if it was not a mortification to me to have a discount to make, and

Crito.

Crito. Alas, Philo, we are not yet come to the end of the reckoning; I believe we have a much larger discount to make, before we shall know ourselves to the bottom, and be able to discover the secret springs of our actions.

Erastus. Nothing is less observed than what Philo has been saying of that superficial intention, which is made to cover and disguise the real motives of our actions; this is what makes so many satisfied with themselves. It is a common maxim, that the best actions, done on bad motives, are good for nothing. It is not enough to do good; we must likewise add good intentions. This is in every one's mouth.

In reality, this way of speaking, sufficiently expresses the case. They are good intentions, added, not to say stitched, to what is called good, or a good action; they are not the root, or living principle; they serve to justify what was before determined by a hidden principle.

However, we are very well satisfied with ourselves on these terms, and give ourselves double applause, both for what we call good actions, and the pretended good intention, which is the principle of them.

Were it necessary to produce examples of this, they might be easily found, without mentioning such as each of us could give from his own experience.

Crito.

Crito. I perceive it would be more agreeable to us to look for them in past times, than to recollect the experience we have had, not to say the experience we every day have, of the matter. What say you, Philo?

Philo. I am intirely of your mind, *Crito*; and to take our eyes off of ourselves, we need only look into the Jewish history, or into that of the life of JESUS CHRIST, and the first Christians. Observe, for example, the zeal of Demetrius of Ephesus for the great Diana, the image that came down from Jupiter. What is more reasonable than to defend the interest of the goddess? Private interest was the spring that put all into motion: the interest of the great Diana came in very seasonably for justifying, and even canonizing, the action of Demetrius.

Eraustus. This instance says something; but it is not one of the most refined. The Jews and Christians might furnish us with some better calculated for imposing on the world. We may guess from thence, that the more spiritual the religion presented to men was, the more refined were the pretexts they employed for substituting appearance in the place of reality.

Crito. Philo and I thought ourselves delivered for some time, from the tiresome task of seeing ourselves, by looking back for what we did not care to
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see. But what is extremely mortifying, those very examples soon led us to that disagreeable prospect.

Erastus. Since that is the case, Crito, it is a sign you was not very far from it. Those who in a review of times past, seek only to lose sight of themselves, succeed to their wish. Every thing proves a diversion to them; and they do not see themselves in the pieces which most resemble them.

Crito. Perhaps they are angry with the originals, of which they are copies.

Erastus. Nothing so common; but I believe we forget ourselves. I know not which of us has brought some secret charm with him that keeps us here so long to-day.

Crito. That charge can fall only on Mr. Professor of Reveries, formerly dignified by the title of Magician.

D I A L O G U E XXIII.

CRITO, PHILO, and ERASTUS.

Crito. **I** Have just left one, who has been talking to me of you, Erastus; and that much to your advantage.

Erastus. What is his name, Crito?

Crito. Hilarius, son-in-law to Serapion.

Erastus. He is a man of merit; and, among other good qualities, very judicious.

Philo.

Philo. Are you particularly acquainted with him, *Eraustus*?

Eraustus. I never spoke to him, I know him by sight; he has a mien which prejudices one in his favour; besides, I have heard him very well spoken of.

Crito. This is being even with one another. He likewise esteems you, on having heard much said to your advantage; and I doubt not, but if he knew the value you have for him, his idea of your merit would be heightened. I shall not fail to let him know it the first time I see him.

Philo. I have heard *Hilarius* spoken of in a different manner. He is by several charged with attachment, and want of delicacy, when his own interest is in question.

Eraustus. They are prejudiced persons, *Philo*; or perhaps have an interest in talking of him at that rate.

Philo. May it not as well be supposed that those, who have spoken to his advantage, may be prejudiced in his favour, or perhaps have an interest in crying him up?

Eraustus. What interest can they have in that? This is diving too deep into things; a man cannot be too easy of belief, when he would judge charitably.

Philo. True; but take care, *Eraustus*, that while you judge charitably on one hand, you do not judge
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rashly on the other, by charging those who have spoken disadvantageously of him, with calumny, or bad intentions. Enquire a little what could engage you to justify Hilarius, to the prejudice of others.

Eraslus. Unless it be the esteem he has expressed for me, I know not what could be my motive. But, dear Philo, will you, in your turn, inquire what could induce you to side with those who speak disrespectfully of him?

Philo. Unless it be that, being formerly concerned in a cause against my client, he carried it; I do not see what could make me suspect the good things that may be said of him.

Eraslus. You and I, Philo, are very proper judges of his merit. What says Crito to the matter? He, no doubt, is neuter; and consequently in a condition of judging such judges as we are.

Crito. I am examining whether I am neuter or not. I ought to be so; for I never had any quarrel with Hilarius; and interest can have no share in the opinion I may form of him.

Hold; I now remember that, in a dispute which I had with Aristus, he professed to give into my notions; and observed the superiority I had over my antagonist in certain respects. Besides, he is in my way of thinking in regard to Trophimus and Gaius, with whom I could never agree. This is more than enough for making me exceptionable. We
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are all three in the same case; and must look elsewhere for a judge.

Philo. Here now is a scene that might furnish Mr. Professor of Reveries with much matter for a dissertation in his way.

Crito. It gives a lively image of the power of Mr. Interest over our judgments, over the advantageous or disadvantageous opinion, we form one of another.

Philo. When Erastus first spoke of the influence which interest might have over our opinions or judgments, I almost thought he overstrained the matter: for I then considered interest only in point of money; but I soon found that by private interest we are to understand all that touches us to the quick, whatever affects us most strongly.

Erastus. We have, perhaps, all found by experience, that when our honour or character was attacked, we were not less concerned than if our purse had been in danger. To take the matter right, these two sorts of interest are so closely united, that they may be confounded into one. Were we but a little accustomed to sound ourselves, to see our secret inclinations and views, we should find that the interest of fortune and that of worldly honour, are but one and the same object, one and the same mark, at which we aim, without thinking of it distinctly.

Crito.

Crito. It is evident from experience, that one is a very proper means of leading to the other. Nothing goes farther toward gaining a man a general esteem, than a plentiful fortune. As soon as he knows how to make himself honoured for his riches, he commences a man of merit. On the other hand, nothing so much makes men desirous of universal esteem and approbation, as the secret hopes they ground on them of making or improving their fortune.

Eraſtus. Hence it may be concluded, that all the little private interests are like so many strong cords, which all terminate in the great rope of fortune, on which that of reputation is often no more than a dependent. When any one of these little cords is touched, and we find ourselves hurt by the action, we do not think of inquiring into the cause of it; at least we do not think of going so far in quest of it. The subject which occasions this pain, seems absolutely unlike the cause itself.

Philo. Without going far for an instance, what led me to suspect the handsome things said of Hilarius?

Eraſtus. And what was it that engaged Eraſtus to look on him with so favourable an eye, and give him the character of a judicious man, without having ever heard him speak? What induced him to tax those, who spoke to his disadvantage, with calumny; and take the contrary opinion for right

right sterling, without knowing which was best grounded?

If the persons generally esteemed, and who value themselves upon it, knew what that esteem held by, and the principle which produces it in those who express it, they would find themselves not much obliged to their admirers. I speak of the most sincere esteem. He who has such a one for another, soon finds his account in it: it is serviceable to him several ways; sometimes for making a shew of his own judgment and good taste, and thereby acquiring the esteem of those who hear him: at other times, for engaging a return from the person himself, either by some real service, or a reciprocal esteem.

It is somewhat singular, that gratitude, which is now hardly to be found among men, is always admitted, more or less, in regard to esteem; in that point we never miss our aim, and may depend on a return.

Crito. I have observed it more than once, without being able to assign the reason. Certainly nothing is more scarce in the world than gratitude; as long as men may expect any thing from you, they are entirely devoted to you: Are you out of a condition of serving them in any thing? they are at liberty, and willingly give you leave to retire to the other world.

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The case is not the same in regard to esteem; we find no ingrates on this article. No sooner a man knows you value him, but he begins to do the same by you; and though you are not in a condition of doing him any other service, he retains a grateful sense of that to the day of his death. He esteems you merely because you esteem him. Is any thing more equitable?

Erastus. Is it not possible to solve the riddle? I fancy a little magic would enable us to do it.

In quality of magician, then, I unfold the mystery, and say, that these two contraries have but one and the same cause for their principle, and may very well subsist together in the same subject. This principle is Mr. Interest, who gives only with a view of receiving, and of receiving more than he gives.

Hence it follows, in the first case, that whatever good he has received from any one, when that person can do no more for him, he gives himself no concern about restitution, unless he is forced to it by another indirect interest.

Gratitude is quite out of the question. How happens it that Mr. Interest is so grateful in regard to esteem? It is because, in the latter case, he gives nothing without receiving a return at the same time. What he gives, costs him nothing; and what he receives, sometimes procures him more than esteem. But, though it was confined to a
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bare return, he would still be largely repaid his expences; because the value he sets on himself is authorised by the value set on him by a man of judgment and good taste. Now he cannot avoid esteeming a judicious man, therefore nothing is more equitable than to esteem those who esteem us.

Thus Mr. Interest is engaged by a principle of justice to make a return in the latter case, though he willingly excuses himself in the former.

Philo. Mr. Interest must certainly have justice or equity much at heart. Some people imagine they cannot agree one with the other; they are mistaken, no doubt, since the contrary is evident from experience.

Eraslus. They agree so well, that justice and equity lend Mr. Interest their names as often as he wants them. He may even borrow their dress on certain occasions.

Abshalom is an instance of this. It is well known that private interest was his counsellor in all his actions; however, he still retained a great esteem for the names of justice and equity, and fetched deep sighs for their re-establishment. "O that I were made judge in the land, said he, that any man, who hath any suit or cause, might come to me, and I would do him justice." *

• 2 Sam. xv. 4.

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Here now is a stroke of Mr. Interest's art in old times. He has made a considerable progress since; his practices are more secret at present; he knows how to render himself imperceptible where he has most power. He appears only under the names and dress of justice and equity.

Crito. Hence, without doubt, arises that double intention, of which we talked yesterday. The true one is least perceptible.

Eraslus. It is certain that the real principle, on which we act, is commonly most hidden. The borrowed motives, by which we proceed on reflection, are much more easily perceived.

When we have occasion to say to ourselves that we do this or that on such or such a motive, it looks very like that superficial intention, which is only put on, and serves as a covering to the real intention.

Philo. It seems to me very difficult to make a just and distinct discovery of such secret springs through so many covers.

Eraslus. Nothing from without can penetrate so far, unless a principle more profound than those covers, opens a passage. This principle is conscience. Every one feels from his own experience, that it alone can distinguish reality from appearance, and true from borrowed motives.

Philo. That is beyond all dispute. I have often found that, when I was in the wrong in regard

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to any one, I had no difficulty in justifying myself; at least I justified the goodness of my intentions, and the motives on which I acted. But as soon as I vouchsafed to sound myself one moment, the language of conscience made those borrowed motives vanish, and shewed me the true ones; so that I could not impose on myself, without calling in reasoning, in order to colour over what I had no mind to see in its natural deformity.

Erastus. This comes up to the observation we have often made. The origin of the false is in the will; and introduced into ideas by the will. Truth therefore must begin with correcting the false of the will, before it can correct that of ideas.

Here the distinction and relation between conscience and right reason is clear. The former shews and corrects the false of the will, by way of sentiment: the latter shews and corrects it in ideas by evidence.

Hence it appears, Philo, that I did not explain myself well, when I gave you room to think, I admitted the language of conscience, exclusive of that of right reason. I consider them as inseparable; and if I at first mentioned only that of conscience, it is because I looked on it as the introduction to the other.

Were I to give a more methodical definition than ought to be expected from a Reveur, I should say that it is more the business of conscience to demolish,

lish, than to build; to make men sensible of the false, rather than point out the true. The demonstration of the true belongs to right reason; but as the true can be demonstrated only on the ruins of the false, it follows that we are led to that demonstration, only so far as we allow conscience to make us sensible of the false.

Crito. This definition seems to agree perfectly well with what has been said in the letters on conscience; and methinks it gives no small light to them.

Erastus. In order to explain things better in regard to the office of conscience, we ought to go back to our distinction of the false into speculative and practical. The latter is the origin of the former; and conscience is in a particular manner employed on the false, as practical.

This sort of false is more easily understood, than defined; and consequently conscience discovers and corrects it by the sentiment. This false is in the will; it is the contrary to uprightness and sincerity. As opposite to uprightness, it wilfully shuts the eyes against truth, and endeavours to impose on itself. As opposite to sincerity, it endeavours to appear what it is not, and impose on others.

In order to impose on itself, it makes use of pretexts, subterfuges and evasions. In order to impose on others, it uses disguise, dissimulation, and all that goes by the name of appearances. In this

consists the false of the will, or the practical false, on which we have observed that conscience ought to be employed.

Crito. You said, Erastus, that conscience shews the false of the will by the way of sentiment. I find a proof of that within myself. I began to experience something of it, when I told Philo I wanted honesty in regard to myself, and that I was made sensible of this defect by a *Je ne sçai quoi*, the language of which was so true, that I could not contradict it.

Philo. It was to no purpose for me to put a good face on the matter; I felt the force of it in spite of all my endeavours to avoid it. I was then exactly in the disposition, which Erastus has just now described, in regard to the false of the will.

On one hand, I strove to impose on myself, and thus became very dexterous at starting difficulties, and evading the question, when it pressed me too close. I then began to banter Crito on the progress he made, or look on my watch, and tell you it was late.

However, I managed my game pretty well; and by doing my best to impose on myself, omitted nothing that might impose on others. This made me complaisant in appearance, while I was very far from being so in reality. I put on an air of impartiality and attention to truth, while I heard but with one ear, and was deaf with the other. I

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knew how to yield at proper times, and agree to several things, that I might not be suspected of obstinacy. I pretended to be full of moderation, when I was most vexed. In order to disguise the matter more effectually, I began with commending Erastus's penetration, and justness of judgment; by which I gained a double advantage. I interrupted him when his discourse hit me home; and at the same time appeared equitable and judicious. I did not care to shew my jealousy of Crito; and when I pretended to detain Erastus, I could have wished he had fixed the next day for his journey.

Judge now, dear Erastus, whether you have any need to be very long in explaining in what the false of the will consists. I can talk learnedly of it in all respects; and think I may say that a want of uprightness, by which we endeavour to impose on ourselves, causes that want of sincerity, which prompts us to impose on others.

Crito. Can it then be doubted that sentiment and experience are able masters? I am no longer surprized at what Erastus has so often said of them.

Erastus. All the lessons which conscience can give us, are reducible to sentiment and experience, and what Philo has just now observed, is a proof of it.

Philo. It is certain that the sentiment alone has unveiled me to myself. It is the sentiment that reproved me for want of uprightness, as well as for

want of sincerity. When I sought for evasions, or shifted the question, I was very sensible that I would not see, or looked on one side. In short, I found that I did not go strait forward; and when I composed myself, in order to appear what I was not, I was but too well convinced that my heart gave my tongue the lie.

Crito. At that rate, every man might easily know himself. One moment's attention to what passes within himself, would be sufficient for letting him see how much he is disguised; and the surprizing pains we take to appear this or that, are a certain sign of our being far from what we would appear.

Erastus. An attention to what passes within one's self, is too mortifying, dear *Crito*. An attention to the most abstract ideas, gives us no trouble in comparison of that.

An attention to what passes within one's self, is extremely easy to a man, who can resolve to see himself as he really is. It requires no dispute, no labour of the head. In all these respects, it is neither tiresome nor painful. It is of so simple a nature, that, in order to express it, we ought to find another term than attention; at least, if by it we understand any application of mind.

Man, for example, is capable of attention in two respects, either in regard to what he feels, or to what he sees. The former is more easy, and requires no application. The latter is more difficult;
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it cannot be performed so expeditiously, or with so little danger of mistake.

Crito. I understand you, Erastus; and, if I am not mistaken, you mean that the sentiment of pain or pleasure, cold or heat, for example, requires less attention than is necessary for the discovery of objects, which present themselves to the sight. Attention to what we see, requires some sort of application, at least for seeing distinctly the diversity of objects; whereas attention to what we feel, is so quick and simple, that it is even unavoidable, unless the machine is out of order, or the application is very strong another way.

Philo. I believe that sensation, when somewhat lively, gets the better of the strongest application. How great application soever I gave, a few moments ago, to Erastus's discourse, I was sensibly affected with the sting of a wasp. I should think that sensation of itself awakens the attention.

Erastus. It is certain, that a quick sensation naturally rouses the attention; but when sensation is half stupified, by some disorder in the machine, the defect in the vivacity of the sensation must be supplied by attention. But, waving all comparisons, this may lead us too far, and prove a rub in our way. What I meant by it, is that, in the generality of mankind, the sense of conscience is very much blunted and stifled. Those in whom it is

less active, want a greater degree of attention for perceiving it.

This attention renders the sensation more nice and lively; and in proportion as it becomes so, it advises more by itself, than by the attention given to it; or at least, this attention is so simple, that it seems entirely natural. It must be allowed, however, that it is thus easy only to such as have already made some progress in uprightness.

Philo. I see my mistake, *Eraustus*; I did not consider men in very different classes, in regard to uprightness and delicacy of sentiment. I now understand that, without distinguishing the different degrees in which they may be, in that respect, we fall into contradictions or confusion.

Eraustus. Dear *Philo*, be pleased to understand likewise, that an attention to what passes within ourselves becomes every day more natural, as we accustom ourselves to it; and thus the sensation is made more quick and lively.

When a man is gone thus far, all that has the least appearance of the false, is immediately re-proved and condemned. The borrowed or superficial intention, which covered the true one, will pass no more; or, at least, it is presently known to be false. The least disguise we employ, to impose either on ourselves or others, is immediately thrown off by this nice sensation. It cannot bear what has been invented for substituting all the imagination

imagination forms, for procuring a false repose, in the room of the sentiments of the heart, uprightness, and sincerity.

Crito. I perceive that sentiment is still very dull in me; and as it becomes more lively, it will make me sensible of what I have not yet perceived in several particulars. The last thing you said gave me an idea of it. What you there described, passes for religion with several; instead of being placed in the rank of the falses, it is called devotion.

For my part, I was always highly pleased with myself, for rising above bigotry or superstition; but I find I am not yet free from several things, which are, properly speaking, only so many substitutions to reality.

Erastus. The false of this kind is, I think, most difficultly removed, and what we deceive ourselves in the longest. This most effectually enables us to impose on ourselves, and be very well satisfied with ourselves in regard to religion.

A disguise of this nature is much more seducing than the coarse disguise, by which we strive only to impose on others. Those who confine themselves to the latter, are very sensible, that, in the main, they are not very valuable.

The former, on the contrary, being ignorant of their disguise, and taking what is only put on or borrowed, for reality, imagine themselves very worthy of esteem. They even believe they act very

honestly; and the pains they take to impose on others, seem to them no disguise; it is a piece of well judged prudence for maintaining the reputation they deserve.

Philo. We observed, some time ago, that the most effectual disguise is that which is least perceived; that, by long custom, it becomes as natural as breathing; and I am of opinion, that nothing supports it more than what is termed religion, independent of conscience, or uprightness in obeying its dictates.

Erastus. It must be owned, that religion taken in that sense, is fit for all manner of purposes. Men are too artful, not to make use of it as necessity requires.

I have less regard here to the temporal advantages to be procured by it, than to one more material and refined. I mean, a certain repose of conscience, at which all men aspire, a sort of assurance for futurity, which removes all the disquiets they may feel on that score. This repose or assurance is very necessary for enjoying the advantages of fortune: their interest is not less concerned in seeking what may make them easy in their pleasures, than in acquiring a fortune that procures them those pleasures.

Hence it is easily comprehended, how much all men are interested in religion, since it is of so universal use.

Philo.

Philo. Is not this the origin of all the most extravagant religions? Should I say it is conscience, I should fall into my old quibbles. It must be said, that conscience is the occasion of it; and that, in order to make it easy or silent, men have substituted what they call religion, in the room of the reality it requires.

Crito. This is making conscience a proper reparation.

Philo. The reparation would be easily made, if words were sufficient for that purpose; they might outwardly repair the damage I have done it by my former accusations; but, as the source of those accusations was a secret principle of resistance or opposition to truth, I think the reparation can be real only as far as I allow truth to destroy that principle, and thus become as susceptible of its impressions, as I was before incapable of receiving them.

Crito. This comes up to the evidence, to which obedience to conscience ought to lead us. If I am not mistaken, Erastus meant that, by attention to what we see. He thereby distinguished the sentiment of conscience, from the evidence which results from it, or the language of right reason.

If conscience is employed on the practical false, right reason, without doubt, is employed on the speculative.

Erastus. This is what we call reuniting subjects. But, to begin with attention to what we see,

methinks it is so cloudy, that we may expect a heavy shower.

Crito. And, by way of attention to what we feel, I can tell you it is time to go to supper.

DIALOGUE XXIV.

CRITO, PHILO, and ERASTUS.

Crito. **I** Have just now been entertained with a scene, which has convinced me, that it is impossible to be judicious, without neutrality, or an equilibrium. It was acted by ingenious men, and old friends, but whose interests were somewhat different.

Not to amuse you with a long detail of what passed, you must know that Menander, who had been informed of their difference, undertook to make them subscribe their own condemnation, without seeming to have them in view. To that purpose, he introduced a case, which, in the main, was exactly their own, though disguised.

He submitted the examination of it to those gentlemen, as indifferent persons. They maturely weighed the reasons on both sides, and concluded, that the matter ought to be made up; that each of the parties should make some concession in favour of his antagonist. The rest of the company thought the conclusion very judicious. Menander did not immediately

immediately apply the case, but let the discourse turn on other subjects. About three quarters of an hour after, he laid hold of an opportunity, which offered, of putting the two friends on their own affair, but in a jocular way, as speaking of what ought not to be handled seriously among friends.

They, for some moments, kept up the raillery; but soon fell into the grave strain. One of the parties began with saying, the question ought to be waved; that it ought not to be discussed in such good company. The other took Menander aside, to tell him his grievances. Menander endeavoured to make him abide by what he had pronounced on the case proposed; but things were now quite altered, and there was no comparison. Menander then desired him to shew him the difference; here my gentleman was puzzled. After some wretched shifts, he looked on his watch, and said he had an appointment elsewhere.

Menander then attacked the other, who put on an air of indifferency, said it was not worth while, and that it was a trifle, which would be soon adjusted; as a proof of which, he observed, that they had not discontinued their visits one to another. All this Menander granted, and added, that their case was exactly the same with what he had started; so that nothing was so easy as to decide it in the same manner. As he did not expect this stroke, he was gruelled; he had no mind, either to depart
from

from his former decision, or retract what he had said concerning the small importance of their difference; he was reduced to make a distinction between their case, and that proposed. This distinction shewed he had the affair at heart, and that it was not so inconsiderable as he pretended.

In short, not knowing how to get out of the scrape, he was seized with a shivering, which put him in apprehension of a fit of the ague; whereupon he thought it a point of prudence to go home immediately.

The two persons concerned being gone, the spectators had matter enough before them, from the scene that had passed. But, as only two of the company were neuter, the rest acted a new scene, each siding with the person he loved best. What they before thought very judicious in the case supposed, was now quite otherwise. Each man saw objects with other eyes, not to say with other glasses. For my part, as I had no inclination to enter into the dispute, and not knowing how long it might last, I left the room.

Philo. Stories like this are not uncommon. Every one knows, that the point of view varies very much, according as passion or private interest is concerned. But, I think men rest contented, with perceiving how ridiculous others are in the case, without thinking to make their own advantage of the observation.

Erasmus.

Eraſtus. As long as a man is not in the like circumſtances, he imagines himſelf very far from acting on the ſame principle, which produces in others ſuch effects as he diſlikes. He is greatly pleaſed with himſelf, that he is not capable, as he thinks, of being influenced by a paltry intereſt : he remembers that on ſuch an occaſion he acted in a very different manner. This is ſufficient for congratulating himſelf on the fairneſs of his character, and the goodneſs of his heart.

Crito. We ſhould perhaps be much out in our reckoning, if we here took the method mentioned by Eraſtus the other day : I mean, if we judged rather of the effects by the cauſe, than of the cauſe by the effects.

Philo. But how is it poſſible to diſcover a cauſe, which is commonly concealed under ſo many good intentions ? If that is the trueſt principle, which makes leaſt noiſe, how ſhall we be able to penetrate ſo far, unleſs it be by that attention to what paſſes within us, of which we were talking yeſterday ? I am pretty ſenſible that is the point ; but, at the ſame time, I am as ſenſible of the difficulty of reſolving on it, at leaſt of entirely reſolving on it, and conſenting to ſee the inmoſt receſſes of our own hearts.

Crito. You may add, Philo, that it is not leſs difficult to be willing to open the eyes to thoſe truths
which

which reprove us, or may carry us farther than we desire.

Erastus. This last step, though difficult in itself, ceases to be so, when once we have resolved to take the first; or rather it is a natural consequence of it.

The truths, which we are most apprehensive of seeing, become painful to us, only by the opposition they meet with in us: that opposition is much more in our will or inclinations, than in our ideas. Hence it is an easy conclusion, that when we have once consented, in good earnest, to discover the bottom of our will, or inclinations, we find no difficulty in opening our eyes to what may reform us.

The free consent, by which we give conscience leave to correct the false of the will, is the same by which we allow evidence to rectify the false of ideas.

This shews the near relation between the language of conscience, and that of right reason, since the same consent admits both.

Crito. And consequently, that without uprightness of will, or the equilibrium which follows it, we cannot be judicious in all respects.

Philo. The scene which you just now opened, is a pretty good proof of that. It appears, that in general, each man in the company was judicious enough in the case proposed, as relating to persons unknown; but, as soon as they found themselves concerned

concerned in it, some personally, others through prejudice for their friend, the case was altered; what was before very plain and evident, now ceased to be so. In reality, there is a wide difference between what concerns ourselves, and what relates to another.

Eraſtus. It appears from hence, that it is entirely in our own power to admit, or ſhut out evidence, according to the deciſion of our will or intereſt.

This is readily acknowledged in civil affairs; and if our eyes are not good enough for ſeeing this principle in ourſelves, at leaſt we ſee it in others. Thoſe, for example, whoſe intereſt has ſuffered from it, can remember it; nothing is ſo fine as the moral reflections they make on that ſubject.

“ O times ! O manners ! ” (ſaid a perſon the other day, in his own caſe) “ Where ſhall we find honeſty ? Men ſtick at nothing ; conſcience is laid aſide. Mr. — knew in his conſcience, that money was mine by right ; I deſired no other judge ; I wanted ſome formalities ; he had them on his ſide ; that is ſufficient for ſtifling all remorſe, and gaining his cauſe. Apply to the moſt judicious man in the world,” continued he, “ the moment his intereſt is concerned, he loſes his judgment, and begins to perplex the moſt ſimple and evident caſe.”

I admired

I admired the unfortunate gentleman's zeal for the interest of justice, and the respect he shewed for the authority of conscience; since he desired no other judge but that of his antagonist. I then recollected what had been said in the reveries, concerning the art of making an advantage of one's neighbour's conscience, while men give themselves but little concern about using their own. After all, nothing is so ingenious; this is making a testimony, that interiorly corrects others, subservient to our temporal interest.

Crito. It seems we are resolved to make no use of what is given us merely for our own service.

It is certain that the business of conscience in man is confined to reproving and correcting him; it never reproaches us with want of uprightness in another. That other has within him the same witness, who will soon make him feel him, if the person doth not stifle all sense of him. We are under no apprehension from another man's conscience, unless it be indirectly by the obedience that other pays it; and thus gives our conscience occasion to reproach us with the contrary conduct.

That case excepted, the direct language of conscience regards only each man in particular. Have you had a difference with another? As soon as you enter into yourself, you feel reproaches, not on his, but on your own being in the wrong. You may, indeed, perceive another's fault; that falls under

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the cognizance of evidence ; but conscience or sentiment will never reprove you for another : its language frequently produces the contrary effect ; it justifies to us the person whom we unjustly condemn ; shews us our fault at large, and pleads the cause of our adversary.

Here men cry up the authority of conscience ; and endeavour to make their advantage of it ; not of their own conscience, but of that of others, so far as it indirectly concurs with their own in procuring some temporal advantage.

This is no new practice ; we have an instance of it in the gospel. A certain man, hearing our Lord speak of not setting the heart on riches, immediately laid hold of this opportunity of desiring him to inculcate the doctrine to his brother, who refused to give him his inheritance. Nothing could be more equitable ; he asked no more than his right.

Philo. There is no room for doubting, that conscience indirectly concurs to the good of civil society ; but it is probable, that those who know it, only by the temporal advantage they reap from it, will not have reason to be long pleased with it.

Eraustus. They will one day be sensible that they have inverted the use of it, and that the advantage they have made of their neighbour's conscience has been very inconsiderable, in comparison of the injury they have done themselves, in desisting

pising the language of their own. They will understand that, if the authority of conscience ought to regulate civil society; this can be done only by regulating the conduct of each of the persons who compose it: that if one single person, refusing to be interiourly regulated, or made upright, should pretend to make a temporal advantage of another, such pretended advantage would only render him more miserable.

Every one will know, sooner or later, for what end conscience was given him. It is in vain to endeavour to avoid its acquaintance at present; the pains we take to blind ourselves in that particular, speaks almost as much of it, as the language itself, which we will not hear.

Crito. Might not the same be said of the pains we often take to obscure certain truths, or evade the force of them? The art we are obliged to employ on that occasion, shews plainly there is a design, and that we endeavour to get out of the reach of evidence.

Erastus. The pains we take to stifle sentiment, and fly from evidence, are so closely connected, that they may be considered as one and the same thing. They flow from the same principle, and have the same tendency. That tendency is to impose on ourselves, as we were saying yesterday; and it is impossible that the man, who endeavours

to stifle sentiment within himself, should not at the same time shut his eyes against evidence.

Crito. By the rule of contraries, I should think it might be fairly concluded from thence, that every one who admits sentiment, thereby admits evidence, or the language of right reason.

Erastus. The inference is just, if you mean that every one, who allows conscience the liberty of correcting him, is thereby better able to form a sound judgment of what he sees.

But it would be a great mistake to imagine, that the first degrees of uprightness are sufficient for making a man capable of seeing all things distinctly, and forming a sound judgment of every thing. You know better than I, that the rule of contraries doth not prove as much in the positive as the negative. For example; I shut my eyes, therefore I see nothing. I open them, therefore I see every thing. Here now are the two opposites; the first is self-conclusive; the latter requires several restrictions to make it just.

Philo. This puts me in mind of our catechism on the point of view, or evidence. I understand, by the comparison of the hill,* that evidence must have an infinity of degrees, that the point of view changes, that it becomes more extensive and more exact, as we advance; and that it would be in vain

* See Dialogue XX.

to attempt to open one's eyes for discovering at the foot of the hill, what can be seen distinctly only by those who are on the top of it.

Crito. You leave me nothing more to say, *Philo.* This is not civil. To let you see I have not forgot my catechism, I add, that the power of the will over the understanding, is much more absolute in the negative than in the positive.

The will may, by a free and sudden act, shut the eyes against evidence; but it cannot in the same manner make us see objects distinctly. In order to do that, it must have made some progress in uprightness, by which it enters into the first degrees of the equilibrium. This equilibrium must have an infinity of degrees, before it becomes entire and perfect. The degree of evidence answers to the degree of equilibrium.

Therefore, when we are arrived only at the first degrees, evidence must be limited in proportion; and here the point of view is far from being clear and extensive.

Eraslus. Hence it might likewise be concluded, that in a point of view thus limited, he is most judicious, who limits his judgment the most, or judges positively only when he is obliged to come to some choice, who even mistrusts the judgment he forms, and is ready to correct it, as soon as he shall see things more distinctly.

Crito.

Crito. At that rate, the best way of forming the judgment, would be not to employ it on an infinity of subjects, as several imagine; but rather to suspend it in regard to every thing we do not know distinctly, and confine it to what is barely necessary.

Erastus. Precipitation in judging of what we are not in a condition of knowing, is perhaps one of the causes most productive of false opinions. The generality of mankind judge of an infinity of things by the eyes of others. The most sensible part of the world know how ridiculous this conduct is. They make a profession of judging only of what they see clearly; but perhaps they are not sufficiently sensible how little they are capable of seeing, what they would judge of, with their own eyes.

Crito. They might ask you, *Erastus*, whether you would advise them to judge by other men's eyes.

Erastus. A wonderful expedient! The thing, however, is pretty common; and the moment that a man is supposed not able to judge for himself, he is advised in a friendly manner to stick to the judgment of persons of a superiour genius.

Crito. But is it not cruel to leave a man thus in suspense, without allowing him to judge either by his own eyes, or those of others?

Erastus.

Eraſtus. Very cruel indeed; provided this man's mind is as ponderous as his body, and he is thus incapable of ſuſpending his judgment.

Philo. In reality, few people are capable of ſo doing; and, if I am not miſtaken, the want of an equilibrium contributes not a little to this incapacity.

Eraſtus. Take notice of one thing. Thoſe, who have already made ſome progreſs in the equilibrium, and are thus more capable of judging of things, are moſt ſenſible of the neceſſity of ſuſpending their judgment, and judge as little as poſſible.

On the contrary, ſuch as have not made one ſingle ſtep in the equilibrium, and conſequently can only judge falſely, will undertake to judge of every thing, and cannot come a reſolution of leaving any thing in ſuſpenſe. The propenſity of their will is too ſtrong, not to force the judgment.

If therefore thoſe, who are leaſt in a condition of judging, are the moſt forward in judging, what weight ought to be allowed to the judgments of the multitude?

Crito. The world is full of judges; who, however, are continually repeating the maxim, that we ought not to judge.

Eraſtus. It is no uncommon thing to find the conduct of men contradict their language. But, if they would be at the trouble of enquiring into the

the cause of this, they would learn to know themselves.

May not Mr. Interest have some hand in this contradiction? What probability is there in the supposition? What can induce him to judge favourably of such or such persons, but a conformity of inclinations and opinions, or the esteem they profess for you? *

On the contrary, what could engage the same interest to judge disadvantageously of other men, but an opposition of sentiments and inclinations, a sort of rivalry, or a superiority that eclipses you?

When the question turns on religious affairs, how can he thrust himself in; unless it is because every man has an interest in forming such ideas of religion, as will not disconcert the plans he has laid down for his conduct, or too much oppose his secret inclinations; in a word, such as will not disabuse him of the favourable opinion he entertains of himself in all respects?

And who knows but the judgments, which men form of religion, may not proceed from the same principle, as those which they form of persons? What at first sight seems so different, may probably be one and the same thing at last.

Perhaps the same interest, that leads us to consider religion in a certain light, inclines us to judge

* See Dialogue XXIII.

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favourably

favourably of such as see it in the same view, and thus justify our conduct and opinions.

But, if private interest can be the principle that leads men to judge of every thing, how can it engage them to speak a contrary language in the old maxim, That we ought not to judge; unless it be done with a view of securing themselves from being judged by others? When we defend an absent person by the same maxim, who knows but the connexion we have with that person, and the apprehension of being judged in our turn, may have some share in the zeal we express for his interest?

One thing to be observed is, that we insist on the maxim of not judging only in regard to persons, not where religion is concerned. In reality, every man takes more care to shelter himself from disadvantageous judgments, than to secure religion against the false judgments, which may be formed of it.

People know not, however, the close connexion that subsists between judgments formed of persons, and those formed of religion.

They do not comprehend that, in order to judge rightly of either, a man must be in an equilibrium: that in order to be in an equilibrium, he ought to know himself, be sensible of the false in his will and inclinations, penetrate into the most secret folds, and view the most secret springs of his own heart: that, till he is thoroughly acquainted with himself,

himself, he must not flatter himself with being in an equilibrium; or, if he has began to enter it, it is only in proportion to his knowledge of the bottom of his own intentions.

In short, men do not understand that, while this equilibrium is imperfect, he is most judicious who judges least, either in regard to persons or religion; or most mistrusts his judgment. He who judges only by maybe's or possibilities in an infinity of things: who accustoms himself to suspend his judgment; not barely to say he suspends it; but to suspend it really in all that is above his reach: to decide nothing interiorly on what is beyond his point of view: who says to himself, that, though things appear to him such, they are perhaps really different; and that truth may one day shew him them in another light.

Philo. This is the secret of being judicious, with the help of but little discernment; at least the secret for avoiding false judgments, is to form as few as possible, and even mistrust those we do form.

I take this lesson to myself; and find it very proper for a man who has gone no farther than the foot of the hill, or the first step of the ascent, and must consequently have a very short point of view. Is it not equitable, that he should limit his judgment in proportion?

Crito. I now see where we are. Erastus was saying the other day, that he had endeavoured to make us mistrust his arguments, only with a view of obliging us to see things with our own eyes. But this makes me sensible that we are not yet in a condition of discovering much ground.* That our main business is neither to know nor judge much of things, but to go on in the road of uprightness; and consequently in the knowledge of ourselves; since, without that knowledge, we cannot enter the equilibrium; and without the equilibrium, we can judge rightly of nothing.

Philo. That will certainly be to us the key of evidence, at least of that sort of evidence which is necessary for finding our way.

Erastus. This distinction seems very proper. There is a sort of evidence absolutely necessary for a traveller, and another barely accessory.

The former is what enables us to find the straightest and shortest way to our journey's end. The latter gives us a distinct view of the objects on both sides of us, and enables us to give a description of the country.

The latter joined to the former has its advantages; but the former alone may be sufficient.

What doth it signify, after all, that we have evidence concerning but few subjects, if we have enough in regard to the essence of the road.

* See Dialogue XX.

This essence is uprightness, an absolute content given to truth for reforming us in all respects, both in our inclinations and ideas.

If this be our disposition, do we run any great hazard? And if an upright will of submitting to truth, on any terms, doth not attain to its end, what other means can conduct us to the true?

Philo. On that foot, all depends on a thorough knowledge of one's own intentions; since uprightness is decisive of the security of the road, and without that knowledge, it is possible to mistake the superficial good intention, so frequently mentioned, for an upright will.

Here is abundance of work cut out, Crito. The business is to search the bottom of ourselves, and judge of ourselves, not by superficial effects, but by the hidden causes, and most secret springs.

Crito. I must own that this sort of evidence would not please me best; an entire evidence in regard to all subjects which fall under our cognizance, particularly in what relates to metaphysics, would have more charms for me. I could have wished that Erasmus had explained at large those truths, which he has only touched on in his *revelations*.

But I now perceive I am to begin at another end, and learn to discover what passes within myself, before I can discover any thing else.

Eraſtus. The diſcovery of what paſſes within one's ſelf, is a proper key for introducing ourſelves into a more extenſive diſcovery. But the diſcovery of all other ſubjects, without that, muſt neceſſarily be falſe, and calculated for deceiving.

Need this be proved otherwiſe, than by what we have ſaid of the equilibrium? How is it poſſible, without that equilibrium, to attain to a juſt diſcernment? And how ſhall we be aſſured we are in the equilibrium, if we miſtake ourſelves?

Philo. Let us own, dear Crito, that we would very fain reach the end without uſing the means. It would be much eaſier for us to expatiate without, in fine ideas, in all that may be termed particular truths, than to allow ſimple truth to unveil us to ourſelves, and reform us. We may ſhake hands upon this.

Eraſtus. Shall Eraſtus join you?

Philo. He is going to put himſelf on the level with us.

Eraſtus. And why not, Philo? Is it worth while to rank ourſelves in different claſſes, for the ſake of a few reveries on my ſide? And do you imagine that I ſuppoſe they have carried me to the top of the hill? I aſſure you, I conſider myſelf as but very little advanced. Theſe reveries are only the reſult of what I have ſeen imperfectly at a great diſtance, and in a very limited point of view.

It

It is my opinion, that, without dwelling much on particulars, we ought to travel in good earnest toward truth. Thus we shall be better able to make a full discovery of what we now see but imperfectly.

Crito. There is no going back in this case ; we must walk instead of speculating. At least, we have the satisfaction of travelling in good company. I make no difficulty of placing myself with you ; it would not be proper to let lady Modesty intervene here.

N. B. *The two following letters were written while the foregoing dialogues were in the press ; and as they were seen in manuscript by several persons, it cannot be supposed, that the conjectures are an after-thought.*

L E T T E R S concerning the D I A L O G U E S.

L E T T E R I.

S I R,

I Imagine the Dialogues will be disapproved of by several, not only men of the world, but even some who make a profession of piety. Persons sincerely pious, and of but little experience, may apprehend so pleasant a stile favours too much of the

gaiety of the world: that conversations, in which raillery and irony are so often admitted, are too contrary to that recollection, which they would never quit. There is never any danger of using too much caution, or distrust, of what one knows not thoroughly. But then we should not be too hasty in passing sentence, on whatever doth not entirely suit our taste. The most common appearances often conceal a fund of truth; and the most beautiful appearances may serve to disguise falsehood. Such as suffer themselves to be dazzled with, or startled at appearances, can never judge uprightly.

It was by judging of things in this point of view, that the generality of the Jews taxed JESUS CHRIST with being a glutton and a wine-bibber, while they looked on the Scribes and Pharisees as so many saints.

The end, which our Lord proposed in conversing familiarly with persons of an ill life, sanctified what appeared irregular to the eyes of the Pharisees, and became to them an occasion of scandal. May not the design of the author of the Dialogues justify, in the same manner, what perhaps may prove an occasion of scandal to such as stop short at appearances?

Our Saviour justified his view, by declaring he was endeavouring to gain sinners, not saints. The author of the Dialogues may justify his, by declaring he endeavours to gain men of the world, to lead

lead them to truth, and make them relish it by offering it to them in an agreeable dress; and, under pretence of amusing them, bring them to what they most fear; I mean, the knowledge of themselves. This artful design cannot displease good men, such as sincerely love truth, and have nothing so much at heart as seeing it established by any possible means.

Perhaps the author should have put an advertisement before his work, for preventing the scruples of good men, by declaring his intentions; but even that would probably have hindered the effect expected from it. The fish will never be caught, if he knows where the bait lies.

The beauties of the mind, which are converted to so ill an use in the world, come originally from God. If nature, which is made purely for man, displays somewhat so gay and lovely, in the spring, shall not the mind of man, who is the king of nature, have something in it still more gay and lovely?

It certainly was at first endued with some such thing; and, how deformed soever sin may have rendered it since, it is still evident from some remaining traces, that it alone was once in possession of more beauties than all the beings in the universe.

Men's fondness for the false beauties of the mind, the care they take to clothe them with borrowed charms, represent what they must have had
Q 5 originally,

originally, and prove that they in vain seek to recover them by the method they take.

The mind of man can become truly lovely only in proportion as it becomes good and upright. That road appearing too long to those who content themselves with what may give them some ease, they chuse a shorter way. They take the shadow for the body, and furnish their minds with borrowed beauties, which they substitute in the room of true ones. Among these beauties is admitted all that is most charming in pleasantry and refined raillery: thus it is easy for them to attain to their end; self-love reaps what it sowed: the effect cannot be unlike the cause which produces it. The most agreeable productions of a mind which deviates from truth can only support and strengthen that deviation, both in itself and others. It often happens, that those amusing productions are most agreeable, as they are of singular service towards making us lose sight of ourselves; as they employ the imagination on pleasing chimæras, they hinder us from feeling our real evils; not to say that such productions are useful for disguising evil, by giving it the appearance of good, or at least, by shewing it in so agreeable a dress, that the heart has no inclination to guard against it.

These are the ordinary effects of those fine compositions, where beauty is diffused through the whole; not as an accessory, to accompany the true,

true, and serve to give it more easy entrance, but as the essence of the work. So that authors of this stamp have hardly any other view than that of pleasing or acquiring praise. Some of them may indeed aim at somewhat more real: and when an author is happy enough to gain universal applause, and acquire the public approbation, he imagines that may carry him farther.

The author of the dialogues certainly does not flatter himself with a success so extensive; so that it is probable his design was not to please universally. Though his style is gay, intermixed with frequent raillery, and even banter, this banter doth not produce the effect that would please most. Instead of helping the reader to lose sight of himself, it is constantly employed in bringing him back to that tiresome prospect; it endeavours to ridicule the false virtues, to which the world offers incense; and by examining them nearly, it shews the value that ought to be set on them. This sort of banter is so far from amusing the imagination with agreeable chimeras, that its tendency is to destroy all that is merely chimerical, in order to make way for realities, to demolish all colourings, compositions, and fine appearances.

This is a kind of banter, under the loss of which the world would be very easy; and I doubt whether the most serious discourses, and most rigid morality, would not be less insupportable than such sort
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of pleasantry. A man must very much mistake his interest, who offers too faithful glasses to persons who are resolved to see themselves handsome. It is to be feared they will be revenged on the glass for the deformity it discovers, or rather on him who is indiscreet enough to present the public with such a glass.

The author of the dialogues would be strangely out of his account, if he had proposed to please and gain applause. What then could be his view? Was it to reform men, by shewing them how ridiculous their false judgments and false virtues are? If so, what is the use of banter, raillery, and the ironical strokes, which are scattered through the whole? Perhaps all these have their use, and concur to that end in a shorter and more expressive manner than the most serious and pathetic discourse.

The ironical turn often expresses more in three words than whole pages in the literal way. It is perfectly in the right place, when it is employed in opposing the false, and turning it into ridicule. The prophets themselves have not declined the use of it. Micaiah, for example, when questioned by king Ahab, ridicules both the false will of the prince, and that of all his prophets, when he employs the same language as they did. Go up, says he, and prosper. How much was here said in two words?

words? and how many words would not have been necessary for expressing them in another manner?

Elijah employs a still more ironical turn, when he says to the prophets of Baal; Cry aloud, for he is a God; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey; or peradventure he sleepeth, &c. There are some false reasonings, and false maxims, which are sufficiently shewn to be ridiculous by the bare repetition or imitation of them. To undertake to refute or oppose them gravely, would be not only more tedious, but even less demonstrative.

I think, Sir, that, after such explanations, men of true piety will no longer be startled, either at the gaiety or the bantering ironical turn, which is diffused through the dialogues in question. If they are otherwise disposed, as it may happen, they will at least allow others to make their own advantage of them; and let men be taken where they can be taken; in order to bring them, if possible, to a relish of truth, and the knowledge of themselves.

L E T T E R II.

On the D I A L O G U E S.

S I R,

I Have consulted the author on what you tell me, that great numbers would be scandalized at not finding in the dialogues the expressions used in books of morality, such as repentance, conversion, recollection, prayer, &c. Take here the substance of his answer.

There is an infinity of books written on religion, where those terms are employed: Such as cannot dispense with those terms, may meet with them there: were the dialogues penned in the same taste, they would be ranked among those books, and be read only by such as make profession of piety; and consequently, would not be a bait for catching men of the world; in short, they would not be a new means of making truth relished.

Though several take the maxim of St. Paul in a very bad sense; of becoming all things to all men, for gaining souls to God; without law to those who are without law, &c. it is susceptible of a very good meaning. In the bad sense, it is only a stroke of worldly policy, the art of pleasing the whole world. In the good one, it is an ingenious piece [of skill, inspired by Christian charity; a condescension

sion for our neighbour, whose prejudices we do not fall on directly, in order to conduct him to truth another way ; in a word, it is knowing how to take men, where they may be taken.

The persons, whom the author had in view in his Dialogues, are not only such as are affrighted at all that favours of devotion, but also wits, as they are called ; with whom quotations from scripture are of but little weight ; or who, at least, would dispute eternally on the meaning of terms. If men of this sort are to be taken at all, it must be by principles so simple and incontestable, that they cannot be denied or disowned. When we have to do with such men, we must lay aside terms, and be satisfied with ideas of the true. It is a great point gained, if by giving up terms, we can make them admit of things. This was the design of our author.

People of the world and wits, openly declare they are neither devotees nor mystics ; but are not disposed to pass for persons void of conscience, uprightness, and a love of truth. In this point all agree to pay homage, in their discourse, to conscience, uprightness, and truth. This, say they, is the essence of religion. It is granted ; they are taken at their own confession ; and by leading them on gradually, they are shewn that this uprightness, which they profess, is perhaps not known to them
in

in its essence; and that, while they extol virtue in words, they resist it interiourly.

The author likewise observed to me, that the design of this work was not so much to present men with a system of religion, as to let them see how little they are disposed to it, and how incapable they are of distinguishing the true from the false, for want of uprightness, or an equilibrium; in short, by the false of their will.

The most excellent treatises on religion or piety, are to several persons what a valuable picture would be, if presented to blind men, who imagine themselves clear-sighted. It would be to no purpose to place such a piece before them; the first thing to be done, is to convince them of their blindness; to make them own their incapacity of distinguishing objects, and thus work them into a resolution of permitting themselves to be cured.

This, perhaps, is the reason why so many religious books produce but little effect. They do not sufficiently send men into themselves, or refer them to the discovery of the secret springs, which determine their judgments.

Here every thing has a tendency to work on man, to unveil his most secret motives and intentions, his opposition to the impressions of the true; in a word, to put him into such a disposition of uprightness and equity, as opens all the doors to truth within himself.

In

In order to judge of the usefulness of a work, and the design of the author, we ought to consider, not so much what the work distinctly expresses, as what it leads to, and the path it opens. Those who have a relish for truth, independent of certain terms, to which men imagine it confined, will soon find the drift of the dialogues; and that, without distinctly expressing several particular truths, they give a key to them, which may be called universal. Of this sort are the distinctions between simple truth, which is only one; and distinct truths, which are many; and that between the indirect testimony which the scripture gives to truth, and the direct testimony of truth itself in the conscience.

Such as read them with a simple and upright disposition, may know in general by the effects, by the impression they will leave behind them, what is the spirit of the work. If those impressions end in displaying to their view the secret springs of their interior; in shewing them the illusions and false appearances, which they have taken for realities; the false opinions and prejudices, to which they had given the name of truth; if they learn to judge of themselves, not by ambiguous effects generally approved, but by the hidden principle or cause which produces them; if, I say, the impressions made by this reading have a tendency towards producing such effects, those who experience them, may thereby discover by what spirit the author was guided,
and

and whether that spirit may conduct such as espouse his maxims.

They will be able to see whether the pleasantry, intermixed in the dialogues, leads them to mere nothings, to things even worse than nothing; to a forgetfulness and mistake of themselves; the common effect of the false pleasantry, that reigns in the world. We have an instance of this in the fifteenth dialogue, the beginning of which affords a scene that, by the different parts there acted, might pass for a comedy. The sequel of the dialogue shews that this sort of comedy has its use; and that by setting the modish false judgments and opinions in a ridiculous light, it may lead us to a thorough examination of the most serious and important subjects.

The following dialogues afford other scenes, of which understanding persons will easily perceive the drift. There are whole pages in the ironical strain, where the discourse seems very grave. If it be asked, to what purpose is all this? It is, because the three friends, who are too well agreed on the substance of things, to speak seriously a contrary language, are obliged to seem to maintain the vulgar opinions, that they may have more room to shew the false of them. The ironical strain is perfectly well suited to this design.

The reader will not, perhaps, understand the drift of those sorts of catechisms, where one acts the professor,

professor, the other the scholar. These are introduced, for uniting, by short questions and answers, those truths which had been scattered through the foregoing dialogues. Such examinations, in quality of friends, would have been ridiculous; it was necessary in this case, that they should assume the titles of Professor and Scholar. Besides, this is suitable to the character of Erastus, who never plays the doctor seriously, and laughs at himself, as soon as he catches himself at treating of any profound subject.

It may be said, that he handles the most abstracted in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth dialogues. True; but then he is led to them insensibly by the objections of his friends, and delivers his thoughts only in quality of a reveur. He sometimes even laughs at himself when he is obliged to philosophize, in order to go back to the principles of things. He pretends no more to the title of Philosopher, than to that of doctor. How could either of them belong to a man, whom several suppose, and perhaps not without great reason, not so much as a smatterer in grammar? All he knows, say they, he has learnt only in his reveries.

These same reveries, having led him to philosophize, in the dialogues last specified, bring him back to man, and to a close view of him in the finest springs, and deepest roots of his actions and intentions.

This

This is the business of the five or six last dialogues, in which, perhaps, several will find on all hands glasses representing them too much to the life. If this should prove to be their case, they may have recourse to the * coloured glasses, which by easing them of that troublesome prospect, will let them see themselves in another light.

- * An allusion to the Fable in the seventeenth Dialogue.

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